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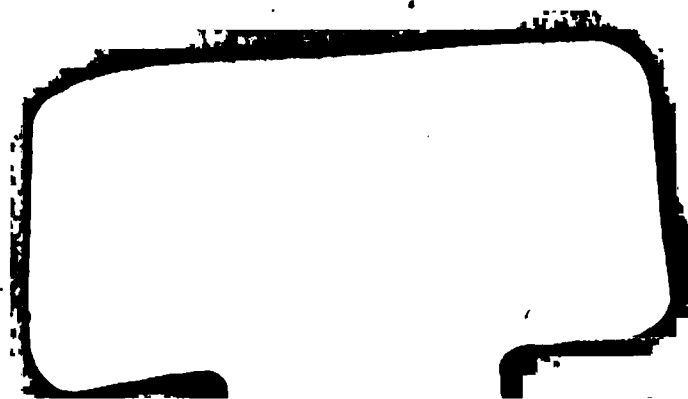
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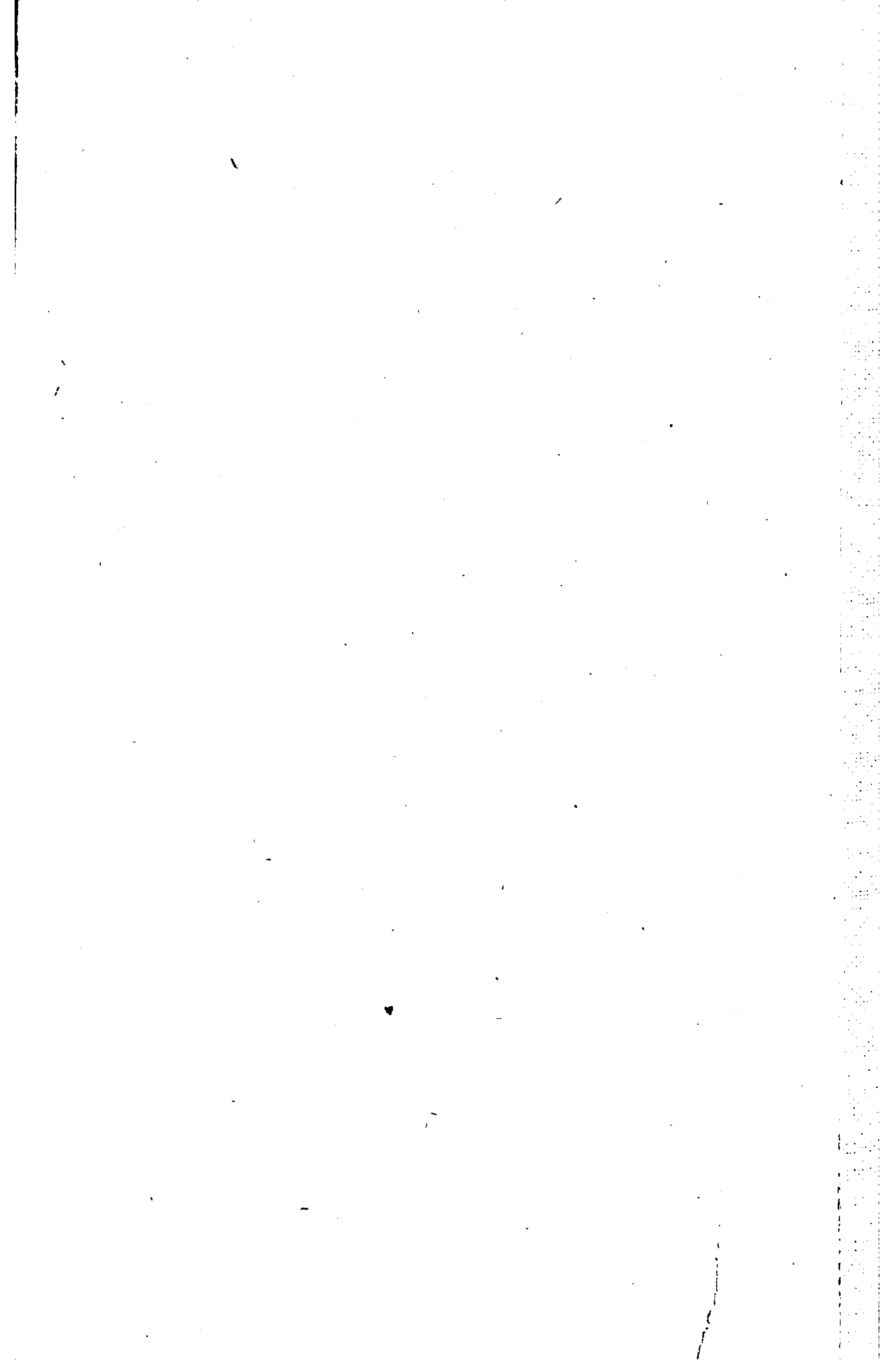
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A MODERN MIDAS.

A Romance.

BY

DR. MAURUS JÓKAI,

Author of "Black Diamond," "The Green Book," "An Hungarian Nabob," "The Nameless Castle," Etc.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL

BY

MRS. LAURA CURTIS BULLARD

AND

MISS EMMA HERZOG.

THE PEERLESS SERIES. No. 117. October, 1900. Issued Quarterly. \$1.00 per Year. Entered at New York Post-Office as second-class matter.

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THE SOUTH



1891

THE SOUTH

four nations—the Romans, the Turks, the Roumanians, and the Hungarians—have each bestowed upon it a distinctive name.

Within it, the cliffs seem to form giant-built temples, in which, with their massive columns and friezes, the fancy almost expects to find the statues of Saints. This temple-like formation extends through a stretch of four miles—with many a turn and winding—ever revealing new forms and new configurations. The sheer face of one precipice is as smooth as polished granite. Red and white veins—like the letters of some ancient book of the gods—penetrate its whole length. In another part of the cliff there is a rusty red surface like molten iron. Here and there lie huge granite blocks, as if flung about by Titans. A fresh turn brings one before what seems the door of a Gothic cathedral, with its graceful spires, and closely set pillars of basalt. On the rust-coloured wall shines a golden spot, like the tablet of the Ark of the Covenant. That is a mineral blossom; it is sulphur. But also living flowers adorn the walls. From the crevices of the cornice they droop like green garlands, placed there by pious hands. They are the giant larches and pine trees, whose sombre masses are diversified with the golden and red colours of the sunburned underbrush.

Now and then this continuous double-walled cliff opens into an enticing cañon, and gives a glimpse into a hidden paradise uninhabited by man.

Here, between the two precipitous walls, brood dusky shadows; and, in the half daylight, a sunny valley smiles like a fairy world, with forests of wild grape vines, whose ripe, red berries lend colour to the trees, and whose falling leaves spread like a carpet over the ground. There is no human habitation to be seen in the valley. A little brook dances along, where the deer fearlessly come to quench their thirst. Then, a little further on, this streamlet—with a silvery gleam—plunges over the precipice.

Once again the mountain-gorge is re-formed, and other temple-like domes are seen—larger and more awe-inspiring than before. These precipices are separated by less than 900 feet, while they rise to a height of 3,000. Yonder stands a sharp peak called the Gropa lui Petro, which, when translated from the Roumanian, means the Sarcophagus of St. Peter. Other Titan-like stone formations near this mountain summit

are named for St. Peter's apostolic companions. Opposite this colossal rock is the Babile. Yonder cliff, shutting off further outlook, is the Dove's Rock. The gray summit beyond, surmounting the Robber's Peak, is the Rasbognick Veli—visible for miles away. Between these rocky walls flows—far below in its wild bed—the Danube.

This majestic primeval stream—the Ister of olden time—sweeping through the smooth plains of Hungary in a bed 6,000 feet in width, quietly rippling under the willows which droop over it from the shore, and reflecting the meadows rich in blossoms, or murmuring with softly-humming mill-wheels, is here suddenly imprisoned in a rocky channel only 800 feet wide.

Ah, with what scorn the river plunges through! One who had marked its former gentle current would no longer know the wild torrent. The old and gray giant has become a young and lusty hero. The waves leap up in fierce foam against their rocky bed—for in the very midst of the channel rises a great mass of stone like a Druidical altar.

It is the huge Babagag in the Cassan rock. Against this rock breaks the wild torrent with unconquerable scorn—leaping over it, and whirling in fierce currents which scoop out fathomless abysses from the stony river-bed. Then, roaring and foaming, the waters sweep over the crags which lie between the overhanging cliffs. In other places, where the barriers are too strong, the river has eaten its way under the overhanging rocks. Here and there it brings earth-formations to cover the boulders in its path, making new islands, not to be found on the map. These in time become overgrown with wild shrubs and underbrush. They belong to none of the bordering kingdoms—neither to the Hungarian, Turkish, nor Servian Government. They are a true No Man's Land. They pay no taxes—they know no rulers—they lie outside of the world—they have not even a name. Now and then the same river which formed them tears one of them away from its foundations, and sweeps off the island with its woods and fields—blotting it forever from a right to a place on the map of the world.

Through these cliffs and islands the Danube flows in a various bed, with a swift current of ten miles an hour; and the ship masters must know the narrow channel well between Ogradina and Plessvissovicza. The hands of men have made

a canal in the rocky bottom of the river-bed, through which large ships can pass; but near the shore there are places where only small craft can find a way.

Following the coast-line of the smaller islands, between the narrowing banks of the stream, some signs of the works of men are seen amid the great creations of Nature—double palisades of strong tree trunks, which come together in the form of the letter V, with the opening up-stream.

These are sturgeon-traps. These fishy travellers from the sea swim up the stream, rubbing their heads against any obstruction, in order to get rid of parasites. They enter into the tree-traps; and, as it is not their habit to turn, they push on to the ever-narrowing snares, until at last they drop into the death-chamber at the end of the V, from which there is no escape.—[In every church one must pay the pew rent!]

There is here an eternal roaring. As the swift river rushes over its stony bed—as it surges against the island altars—as it lashes the lofty cliffs—as it thunders like a cataract—its noise is ever repeated in a perpetual echo by the resounding crags—making an altogether unearthly music—like a medley of organ tones, clashing bells, and dying thunder peals. Man trembles, and is dumb at the sound—ashamed to intrude his voice in this Titanic uproar. Sailors communicate with each other only by signs. Superstition forbids the fisherman to utter a word in this place. A consciousness of the danger of the channel naturally leads to silence, or to an inwardly whispered prayer. For, indeed, he who passes through this rocky gorge, so long as the cliffs frown down upon him, may well feel that he is steering along the walls of his own sepulchre.

And what if to the terror of the sailors is added the Bora!

This is a wind which sometimes blows for a week at a time, and which makes the Danube impassable through the Iron Gate.

If there were but one wall of mountains, this wall would be a protection against the Bora. But the current of air which is pressed in between the two rocky walls is as capricious as is the vagrant wind in the streets of a great city. It blows first from one quarter, then from another. It seizes the ship—wrenches off the rudder—gives work for

every hand—plays havoc with the tow-horses and tow-ropes—and then suddenly the wind changes—and both ship and waves are blown backwards up the stream, like the dust in a city street.

At such times the organ-like tones of the tempest sound like the trumpet of the last Judgment. The death-shrieks of the shipwrecked and drowning mariners are lost in the terrific roar of the howling, re-echoing winds.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAINT BARBARA AND HER PASSENGERS.

At the time of our story no steamboats navigated the Danube. Beginning at Galatz, near its mouth, and following its Hungarian windings far into Germany, good horses constantly paced both its banks—wearily dragging the loaded vessels up stream. On the Turkish side of the river, sails were called into play. In mid-stream, half-way between the two empires, smugglers of salt (swarms of them!) plied their oars. On the Turkish side, salt was one gulden and a half cheaper than on the Hungarian. So the smugglers brought it from Turkey into Hungary, and sold it at a profit. The smuggler and the purchaser made money—but the Government lost its duties. In self-defence the Government established guard-houses all along the shore, manned by well-armed officers, to protect the salt interest. Every village supplied its quota of officials, and each village furnished a like proportion of smugglers. It thus happened that while the young men were in the guard-houses, the old ones were at the same time making rapid progress in their smuggling skiffs up the river to the towns beyond. This developed a fine family harmony, unlooked for by the State.

By this eternal vigilance, the administration accomplished a still higher purpose; it warded off the plague—the dreaded eastern plague. To be sure, we of to-day realise little of the horrors of that dire pestilence; for it was about a century and a half ago, when a frivolous woman, with an infected Semlin shawl, walked to church wearing it, and fell dead at the church door.

Communication with a foreign nation has invariably en-

riched us with an epidemic. To the Chinese we are under obligation for the scarlet fever; the Saracens furnished us the small-pox; the Russians, influenza; South America, yellow fever; Hindostan, the cholera; but we are indebted to the Turks for the pest. Accordingly, the dwellers on both sides of the Danube are under the strictest surveillance in their intercourse with each other. These restrictions make life neither desirable nor enjoyable.

If the plague breaks out in Burssa, immediately every human being and every article on the Servian shore is pronounced by the authorities tainted. Whoever has had the slightest contact with these suspected articles or persons is declared infected, and is quarantined for ten, twenty, or thirty days. Should the rope of an upward-bound boat but touch the tackle of one going in the opposite direction, immediately the whole crew is declared infected, and an order is issued for a ten days' anchorage in the middle of the stream. Thus an innocent hempen cord may legally transmit the dire disease to man and boat indiscriminately.

Upon every vessel there sits in state a ministerial functionary, the "Purifier," a dreadful personage. It is this important man's duty to keep a watchful eye upon all the world; woe to the unfortunate passenger who has accidentally touched a foreigner, or has perchance grazed with the hem of his mantle any manufactured goods of hair, wool, or hemp: for these materials all serve to propagate the pest. At the next landing he is 'suspected of disease.' The unlucky man is torn from his family and surrendered to quarantine. From this effective service the title "Purifier" is derived.

But the plague, it appears, can do no harm to the smugglers, for they are never accompanied by a "Purifier;" and however violently the pest may rage at Burssa, they carry on their nefarious business night and day. It is worthy of note that the canonised Procopius is their patron saint.

Only the Bora disturbs the smugglers' wicked trade. In the rapid stream at the Iron Gate, the strong wind sweeps the helpless skiffs upon the southern shore. The Bora has thoroughly cleared the Danube, and thereby elevated, during the last three or four days, the public morality, and enforced general obedience to the laws of the empire—so that at present there are no culprits who need pardon. So long as this wind prevails, so long may the guardsmen sleep in

peace—for the smuggler (like the sensible man that he is) always submits gracefully to the inevitable.

A little after daybreak, above the sobbing of the wind and the roaring of the waves, the corporal of the Ogradina station hears the peculiar tones of a signal horn, whose sounds can be distinguished ten miles away, and which the thunder of heaven cannot drown. Does it herald an arrival? Or has some unfortunate vessel struck on a rock, and does the horn call for help? There is a ship in sight. She is built of oak, and has a carrying capacity of from ten to twelve thousand bushels. She is heavily laden, for she sinks so low in the water that the waves almost wash over her sides.

She is painted jet black, save the bow, which is silver gray and ends in a tall figure-head covered with shining tin. The deck forward is like a long roof with narrow steep ladders on either side, leading to a bridge which connects both rudders.

At one end of the deck is a double cabin, consisting of two small chambers, with doors right and left. The rooms are lighted by one little window in each, hung with Venetian blinds. In the space between the windows, on an old-gold background, there is painted in rich colouring a figure the size of life, representing the beautiful maiden-martyr Saint Barbara, holding a pure white lily in her hand.

Over the deck, between the cabin and the coils of rope near the bow, is a green box, five feet by two, filled with black earth, in which the choicest carnations and ornamental gilly-flowers are growing. Both picture and jardiniere are surrounded by an iron railing, the bars of which are covered with wreaths and wild flowers. In the centre, in a red glass, burns a votive lamp, and close by are bunches of rosemary and consecrated willow-catkins.

In calm weather, twelve horses could easily have drawn the vessel; but here, against wind and wave, seventy-two barely succeed in dragging her up stream. Those signals were intended for the conductor of the horses. But the language of the horn is as well interpreted by the poor draught-horses as by their drivers. By the sounds of the horn, now shrill and sharp, now threatening or encouraging, man and beast alike know whether to relax speed, to press forward, or to stand stock still.

The safety of the barque is in the hands of two men—the

pilot at the helm and the supercargo who gives his orders through the trumpet. The looks of these men show that they are strangers to fear. The helmsman, a bluff old sailor, is a gigantic fellow, with a coarse red face. The veins on his cheeks make a network of copper-colour, and the whites of his eyes are of the same hue. His voice is always hoarse, and has only two variations—either a loud bellow or a hollow grumble. Probably this limited alternative compels him to exercise double care in protecting his throat, which he does by means of a bright woollen comforter, together with a counter-irritant in the shape of a brandy-flask, which has an habitual place in the pocket of his mantle.

The supercargo, on the other hand, is a man of thirty odd years; he has light hair and moustache. The rest of his face is smoothly shaven. His eyes are blue and dreamy. Of average height, he gives at the first glance the impression of a delicate constitution, an impression which his voice corroborates, for when he speaks softly, it sounds almost like a woman's.

The pilot is Johann Fabula; the supercargo is Michael Timar.

The official purifier sits on the starboard side of the vessel. He has drawn a thick hood over his face, so that only his nose and beard are visible. Both are red. History has failed to record his name. Just now he is chewing tobacco.

To the heavy ship is attached a yawl-boat, which six oarsmen are rowing. A small skiff is fastened behind.

In the doorway of the double cabin stands a man of about fifty years of age, smoking a Turkish chibook. His features are Oriental, but suggest the Turk rather than the Greek; while his costume (including caftan and bright fez) indicates the Greek or the Servian. This gentleman is booked as Euthyn Trikaliss, owner of the ship's cargo. The vessel belongs to Athanas Brasowitsch, in Komorn.

A young girl's face appears at one of the cabin windows, neighbour to the Holy Barbara, as if she too were a saint. This face is not pale but perfectly white, having the purity of marble or crystal. As the Abyssinian's black skin or the Malay's yellow complexion is peculiarly his own, so the snowy clearness of this face is hers alone.

She is still a child, scarcely more than thirteen; but her form is tall and slender; her contour is purely and completely antique, as if her mother, before the daughter's birth,

had been impressed by the marvellous perfection of the Venus di Milo.

The girl's heavy black hair has a metallic lustre; but her eyes are dark blue. The long delicately pencilled eyebrows almost meet on her forehead. Such converging arches lend a strange charm to the features—like an aureole to the brow of a saint.

The girl is called Timea.

These two persons—father and daughter—are the only passengers on the Saint Barbara.

As soon as the supercargo has laid aside his horn, he finds time to turn towards the cabin, to lean on the railing, and to chat with this young girl.

Timea speaks Greek only. The supercargo, at home in this language, points out to her the beauties of the landscape—those gloomy, awful beauties.

Her white face and blue eyes remain imperturbable, while she listens with earnestness. It seems to the supercargo, however, that her eyes are more intently directed towards the gillyflowers, which are exhaling their fragrance at the feet of Saint Barbara. So he plucks two or three, and hands them to the child, that she may hear more plainly what the blossoms are saying to each other.

The pilot sees all this from the bridge, and he is not pleased with it.

"It would be better," he grumbled, and his voice sounds like the rasping of a file, "instead of tearing our most holy saint's flowers and giving them to that child, if you would kindle a consecrated catkin; for if the Lord drives us towards yonder rocks, nothing in heaven and earth can save us. Jesu, help!"

Johann Fabula would have offered his favourite invocation, if entirely alone; but as the purifier sat next him, he had the benefit of it, and a conversation followed.

"What is the sense of our passing the Iron Gate in this high wind?"

"Why, indeed!" answered Fabula, as he remained true to his laudable habit of emphasising his words and strengthening himself for the collection of his scattered thoughts by a deep draught from his brandy-flask. "Only because our voyage requires the greatest haste. There are ten thousand bushels of wheat on board our ship. The crops have failed

at Barate. But in Wallachia the harvest is large. So we are taking this grain to Komorn. Friday is Michaelmas. If we do not hurry ourselves, November will be at our heels, and we shall be frozen in."

"The Danube frozen in November? Not possible. I do not believe it."

"I know it. The Komorn calendar says so. It hangs over my berth in the cabin—look for yourself."

The purifier drew his nose deeper into his hood, and at intervals squirted tobacco juice into the Danube.

"In such threatening weather, do not spit into the river. The Danube does not like it. Whatever the calendar says is Gospel truth. Ten years ago, it prophesied that frost would appear in November. I was homeward-bound on this very Saint Barbara. Everybody laughed at me. But I minded my own business. And on the 23rd, sure enough, it grew cold suddenly, and half the boats were frozen fast. Then everybody—except me—laughed the other side of his mouth. Jesu, help! he, he! Port the helm!"

The wind was boisterously assailing the vessel on every side. Great drops of sweat were running down the pilot's cheeks, in his efforts to steer. He would accept no assistance, but satisfied himself with his devout ejaculation, together with the regular solace of his flask; after which his eyes grew redder and redder.

"If heaven will only help us past these palisades! But we may as well keep our Peter's pence between our teeth, for here we all stumble over our coffin-lids half a dozen times an hour."

"I'll tell you what," said the purifier, taking the whole quid of tobacco out of his mouth; "your vessel has something more than wheat aboard." The pilot shrugged his shoulders.

"That's none of my concern. If there is anything contraband on board, we at least won't be quarantined."

"How's that?"

The steersman turned his hand up backwards, in a way peculiar to Custom-House officers. Whereupon the purifier laughed aloud.

"The current has changed since our last trip. If we do not keep head to the wind, we are sure to get caught in the whirlpool under the Lovers' Rock. Look at that infernal

monster swimming round us!—an old sturgeon, a four hundred pounder, I'll wager. Always bad luck when these devilish creatures run a race with us. Jesu, help! And the supercargo still gossiping with that Greek damsel, instead of keeping his eyes on the teamsters! That girl has brought ill luck to us. The north wind has blown a gale ever since she planted her foot on the deck. She is as white as a ghost, and her eyebrows join each other like a witch's. Herr Timar, ho-ho! Signal the leader."

Timar paid no attention to the pilot's request, but continued to entertain the fair maid with fairy stories of the rocks and cataracts.

Every ravine, cavern, island, and cliff has its tale of wonder;—a petrified library with a romance on each page. No one could better interpret the legends of the rocks than Michael Timar, who had passed through the Iron Gate innumerable times, and who knew every nook and cranny on either side.

"It would be more sensible if you turned your nose to the front instead," grumbled the pilot; then raising his voice he cried, "Ship a-hoy! What is that thing yonder coming down upon us?"

The supercargo turned round, and saw what excited the steersman.

They were now in the narrowest part of the Danube—where the river was not more than 1,200 feet wide, and where the current was very swift. On the north side were numerous cliffs which, if struck, would dash the ship to pieces; and on the south was a maelstrom from which no human power could save a vessel once caught in the vortex. A perilous place for meeting another ship! The steersman's cry was truly a danger signal. A huge object was seen bearing down upon them.

Timar took from Timea's hand the spy-glass which he had given her just before, and levelled it at the dark threatening mass that was rapidly drawing near. "A mill," he answered; "then we are lost!"

A huge mill, which the wind had swept from its foundations, was drifting threateningly toward them. Timar spoke not a word, but handed the telescope to Timea, showing her quietly where she could best see the nests of the eagles whose ancestors had once fed the lovers Mirko and Melieva. He

then quickly took off his coat, sprang into the yawl-boat with the oarsmen, and ordered five of them to step with him into the empty skiff attached to the larger batteau, taking with them the small anchor and the cable.

Trikaliss and Timea could not understand the commands, for these were given in Hungarian. Timar added in that language to the pilot, "Steady the helm—turn neither to the right nor left." A few seconds later Trikaliss himself comprehended the danger which menaced them. The mill came rushing down the foaming river. One could easily see what a broad wake the rattling mill-wheel made. If ship and mill should collide, both would go to pieces at the same instant. The skiff, with the six men, was labouring hard to work its way up stream. Four rowed, the fifth steered; while Timar stood in the bow with folded arms.

And what is this crazy project? A mere shell against a great mill; human muscle combating wind and tide.

Could they grapple the mill, it would only be to be dragged towards the whirlpool with it—the spider entangling the stag-beetle.

The waves rose so high that the five men disappeared from sight, to be seen again a moment later on the topmost crest of the wild sea.

CHAPTER III.

THE WHITE CAT.

The five rowers in the tossing boat took counsel as to what was to be done. One advised to cut away the side of the mill under the water line, so that the thing would sink. But in this plan there was no safety: the swift stream would drive the mill all the same down upon the ship. A second advised that they should board the mill, and with hooks fastened into it, steer it from the boat in such a way that it should be drawn into the whirlpool. But this too was bad counsel; for the current would draw down the boat as well as the mill.

Timar ordered the steersman to turn in the direction of the point of Perigrada Island, which forms the crown of the

Lovers Rock. When they were nearing the cataract, Timar lifted the heavy anchor, and hurled it into the water. He did this so skilfully that the boat was not shaken by the effort. In this feat Timar showed what muscular strength he possessed.

The anchor drew a great coil of rope after it—indicating that the water was deep.

Timar ordered the helmsman to steer as near the mill as possible. The men now understood his plan. He meant to grapple the mill in the middle.

"A bad idea!" said the sailors. "The mill will lie cross-wise in the channel of the canal, and bar the way for our ship, and the rope is so slight that it will break."

Euthyn Trikaliss, when he noticed this design of Timar's, ran up and down the deck of the vessel, hurling his chibook from his hand, and calling to the helmsman to cut the tow-line from the ship, and let her float with the current. The helmsman did not understand Greek, yet from the old man's motions he guessed the meaning. With great composure he leaned on the rudder-post, and answered—"You must not be uneasy; Timar knows well what he is about."

Trikaliss, with the desperation of terror, snatched his cimetar from his girdle, in order himself to cut the rope, but the helmsman motioned to him to look behind him, and what Trikaliss there saw changed his intention.

From the lower Danube a vessel was sailing out into the middle of the river. A practised eye could distinguish the craft many miles distant. It had one mast, whose sails were reefed, a high after-deck, and twenty-four rowers. The vessel was a Turkish galley.

When Trikaliss saw this craft, he thrust his cimetar into his girdle again.

At the first glimpse of this vessel—which he caught from the bow of his own—his face grew red; in a moment it became deadly pale. He hurried towards Timea, who was looking through a spy-glass at the rocky cliffs of Perigrada.

"Give me the glass!" cried Euthyn, trembling with fear.

"Ah, how beautiful that is!" said Timea, handing him the glass.

"What?"

"On yonder crags little marmots are running about, and playing together like squirrels."

Euthyn turned the spy-glass towards the approaching galley; and while his brow grew more and more clouded, his face became deadly pale.

Timea took the glass from his hand, and began to look again at the marmots. Euthyn stood with his right arm flung round his daughter's waist.

"How they dance! How they leap! One runs after the other. O, how charming!"

And Timea, in her excitement, almost sprang from the arm which encircled her, and came near falling over the bulwark into the foaming waters.

Euthyn looked in the opposite direction, and what he saw there gave the colour back again to his pallid face.

Timar, as soon as the mill came within a stone's throw, took in his right hand a long coil of cable, at the end of which was a grappling-iron.

The rudderless mill drifted rapidly nearer and nearer, like some antediluvian monster swimming in the stream. The wheel turned swiftly in the boiling current, and the mill-stones—under the hopper and over the flour-bolter—worked as if they had corn to grind.

There was no one in the mill, which was surely doomed to destruction. Only a white cat sat on the red-striped shingled roof, and mewed pitifully. As they neared the mill, Timar suddenly swung over his head the rope with the grappling-iron, and threw the iron toward the mill-wheel. The cable immediately began to be drawn out by the revolutions of the wheel, and in this way the mill was gradually forced toward Perigrada Island. So, by its own efforts, the mill would aid in the work of self-destruction, and would finally shatter itself against the cliffs.

"I said that Timar knew what he was about," muttered Johann Fabula; while Euthyn replied with joyful emphasis—

"Splendid, my son!" He pressed Timea's hand so tightly that she cried out with pain, and forgot the marmots.

"Look yonder!"

Timea now began to notice the mill. She needed no spy-glass, for the mill and the ship were so close together in the narrow canal that there was scarcely sixty feet distance between them—but enough for the ship to pass by unharmed.

Timea saw neither the danger nor the escape. She saw only the hapless white cat. The poor animal, when the ship with its crew drew near her, sprang from her post on the roof, and ran mewling up and down, as if trying to measure the distance, and see whether she dared venture on the leap.

"Poor kitten!" cried Timea anxiously. "If only the mill would come near enough, so that the cat could jump to our deck!"

But Saint Barbara, the patroness of the ship, saved the vessel from this proximity; and the cable, winding round the mill wheel, became shorter, so that the mill floated nearer and nearer to the shore, and farther and farther from the ship.

"Poor, pretty, white kitten!"

"Do not be troubled about her, my child," said Euthyn, consolingly. "When the mill reaches the rocks, the cat will run ashore, and will live on the happiest terms with the marmots."

Only, unfortunately, the white cat, running round on the side of the roof next the river, did not see the island on the opposite side.

When the ship had passed by the doomed mill, Timea waved her handkerchief to the cat, and called to her, now in Greek, now in the language known to all the feline race—"Quick! turn round! off to the shore!—zitt, zitt, save yourself!" But the endangered animal understood none of all these warnings.

The mill, as the ship was passing it, was suddenly seized by the current; the tow-rope was broken by the violence of the rushing water; and, thus set free, the doomed house shot like an arrow toward the shore. The white cat, mad with fear, ran down the roof. The mill drove on to destruction. Behind the rocks was the whirlpool.

It is one of the worst which the great river forms in its eddying circles. On every chart this spot is marked by two warning arrow-heads. Woe to the ship that drifts in the direction of these arrows! Around this awful water-tunnel, the current foams like a boiling kettle, forming in the midst of the whirlpool a vortex 120 feet deep. What is sucked down into this unfathomable well, no human power can bring up again. If a man falls into it, he may reappear at the resurrection.

The current now carried the mill into this whirlpool. As it reached the eddying floods, the floor broke in two—the waters rushed in—the wheel, with its walking beam, was tilted in the air, and the cat ran to the topmost piece of timber, where, with her back up, she stood motionless. The whirlpool seized upon the scattering planks, and drew them round and round in wide circles. The mill turned over four or five times, cracking and creaking in every joint, until it disappeared in the swirl. With it vanished also the white cat.

Timea, with a nervous shiver, hid her face in her shawl. But the Saint Barbara was saved.

Euthyn shook the hand of each of the returning sailors; but he took Timar in his arms. Timar thought that perhaps Timea would also give him a friendly word, but the girl only asked him—

“What has become of the mill?”

She looked with troubled countenance at the whirlpool.

“Splinters and chips!”

“And the poor kitten?”

The girl’s lips trembled, and tears filled her eyes.

“It is all over with her!”

“But the mill belonged to somebody!” said Timea.

“Certainly! Yet we must save our own ship, and our own lives, or we too would have been wrecked—swallowed up in the pool, or dashed to pieces on the shore.”

Timea gazed through a prism of tears at the man who spoke thus. Through these tears she looked into a strange and incomprehensible world. That it was right to thrust the mill of a fellow-creature into a bottomless abyss to save one’s own ship; that it was allowable to let a poor cat drown to save one’s self;—this she could not understand.

And from that moment she listened no longer to Timar’s wonderful tales, but avoided him whenever she could.

CHAPTER IV.

A LEAP WITH A MAMMOTH.

Timar, moreover, had now no inclination to continue his story-telling; he had scarcely recovered from his perilous conflict when Euthyn handed him the telescope, pointing in the direction he wished him to look. Timar spied in the distance a vessel, and said quietly—apparently ruminating on every word—"A man-of-war, twenty-four oars, the Saloniki." Then, suddenly dropping the glass, he took up the horn and blew at first three, then six short distinct blasts; whereupon the leaders urged their horses to a livelier pace.

Look upon a map of Hungary, and you will discover the rocky island of Perigrada, washed by two affluents of the Danube, both exceedingly hazardous. The one, very narrow, where the water shoots with an arrow-like speed, is devoted to vessels going down stream. The other, a lake, is sown with sharp craggy rocks—some hidden under water, others rearing their heads high above the surface—and all deserving their names according as they represent, in their distinctive contours, grotesque caricatures, or placid statuettes. It is the most dangerous spot below the Iron Gate. Many ships sink here to rise no more. The famous Silistria, a magnificent gun-boat, which was ordered to Belgrade during the Crimean war, was shattered in this place. The Oriental controversy might have had a very different ending had not the peace-loving peak Roskeval given the Silistria that unkind thud in the ribs which laid her prostrate for ever.

But, with all these perils, there is a passage through—known, however, to only a few experienced sailors. By

striking a sudden diagonal at one particular point, a freighted ship can by a jump (so to speak) pass from the Servian to the Roumanian channel. This is a floating mammoth's leap for life. The horn blew nine times. Immediately the leader jumped from his horse. He probably had reasons for this manœuvre. All the drivers, with one accord, began to urge on the seventy-two beasts with shouts and screeches and the cracking of whips. The poor brutes, lashed within an inch of their lives, became more exhausted by five minutes of such suffering than during the whole of an ordinary day's task.

The three-inch cables are stretched to their fullest tension, and are ready to snap. The iron knot to which the cable is attached has become hot from friction. The supercargo stands close to the ropes with a sharp axe in his hand. As the ship shoots at its greatest speed, he suddenly cuts the tow-line. Like a gigantic cat-gut—*snap!* It springs high in the air. The horses fall in a heap—the head one breaking his neck. His rider had wisely jumped off in the nick of time. The ship, its course having been suddenly changed, shot with a lurch through the diagonal, without rudder or guidance—the acquired momentum being sufficient to force her passage. Navigators call this skilful manœuvre “gliding over.”

From the moment that Timar cut the rope, the lives of all on board were in the hands of the pilot. Now comes his opportunity. He cried in his accustomed tones, “Mercy on us! help, Jesu!” but relied after all on his own skill. Timar made soundings with a lead-line in his left hand, while he indicated to Fabula with his right the number of feet of dead water under the vessel's counter.

Should the pilot make a span's mistake now, a single lurch would send the ship and her passengers after the mill—straight into the Perigrada whirlpool; where the beautiful pale-faced child would follow the white cat.

But the pilot's hand steers safely. The dangers of the Roskeval cataract are successfully passed, and now the ship slacks her speed; the eddy has almost paralysed her power. The river bottom is covered with stones.

Timea, leaning over the bulwarks, was gazing into the stream; she was amusing herself by watching, in the transparent waters, the shining fish with ruddy fins, playing in

and out among the beautiful mosaics of yellow, red, and green minerals. It was a time for silent eloquence. All on board knew that they were sailing over a thickly peopled cemetery; that it was only by the grace and mercy of God that they did not lie where the foam of the angry waters could for ever beat *their* gravestones too. The girl alone had no perturbations.

Suddenly she felt her arm seized. Her meditations and her bird's-eye view were alike broken by Timar, who drew her from the bulwark, pushed her into the cabin, and then slammed the door after him.

"Look out! ha, hoo!" roared the ship's crew with one voice.

Timea did not know what was going on, or why she was so ungently dealt with, so she rushed to the cabin window.

She only saw that Timar was standing on the bowsprit with a grappling-iron in his hand. All at once a dreadful tumult followed.

A huge white wave broke over the forecastle—the green crystal-like foam spurting so far beyond the cabin window that Timea for a time was blinded by it. A moment or two later she saw that the supercargo was gone. Outside, the din was turbulent and clamorous. Timea rushed to the door and stumbled upon her father.

"Are we drowning?" she asked.

"No; the ship is saved, but Herr Timar has been washed overboard." Timea had seen this herself. The wave had swept him from the bow before her own eyes. Strange! but neither at her father's words, nor at the sight itself, did her heart beat any faster.

When she saw the poor white cat overcome by the waves, she was almost beside herself with despair. Then, she could not control her grief; and now, though the breakers had swallowed the supercargo in their wild fury, she gave not even a sigh.

The cat, poor thing, had begged piteously for help, while this man defied the world. One was a meek, loving, amiable, helpless cat; and the other a great, disagreeable, ugly, cruel man; but strong and adroit withal: he would be sure to help himself; that was the reason he was a man. Thus the girl persuaded herself.

The crew, taking their boat-hooks, rushed to the small boats to search for the lost man.

Euthyn displayed a well-filled purse.

"One hundred ducats to the man who brings him back alive," he shouted.

"Keep your ducats, Sir!" was heard from the stern of the vessel; "here I am myself!" and he clambered nimbly up the anchor cable, and then as if nothing had occurred took command again.

"Drop anchor!" he cried. And immediately the vessel stood still. "And now to the shore with the skiff," continued Timar.

"Do go below and change your dripping clothes," interposed Euthyn.

"That would be a great waste of time. I shall enjoy more than one baptism to-day; now I am at least waterproof. We must make haste." These last words were intended only for Euthyn's ear.

No sooner said than done. Timar hopped into the small boat, steered it himself, and speedily reached the hut, where other cables and fresh draught-horses were to be obtained. In half an hour, newly equipped, the ropes readjusted, the Saint Barbara was gliding through the Iron Gate.

The ship was saved, and with her the entire cargo, Euthyn, and Timea. Timar was their preserver at the risk of his own life.

And why all this self-sacrifice? He was only a supercargo, only a clerk who drew his wages—and small enough they were.

It can matter but little to him, whether his vessel be loaded with corn, adulterated tobacco, or real pearls. His wages remain the same. Such were the cogitations of the purifier. As they reached the Roumanian canal, he took up the thread of his talk with the pilot.

"Admit now, fellow-countryman, that we never before were so near going to the dogs as we have been this blessed day."

"What's true remains true," replied Johann Fabula.

"But what need had we to try the experiment whether a man can drown on holy Michaelmas? It was flying in the face of fate."

"Hm!" returned Fabula, taking a long emphatic draught from the strawbound flask.

"What does Herr Timar earn?"

"About twenty kreuzer."

"How could the devil tempt you to risk your life for a paltry twenty kreuzer?"

"I receive a florin a day, and found. I have reasons enough to venture my precious neck. I bide my time. What is the matter with the man?"

The purifier shook his head, and pushed back his cap to be more thoroughly understood.

"Listen, man," he continued; "it is my private opinion that that Turkish brigantine which is on our rear is making chase for us, and the Saint Barbara has given the enemy the slip."

"Hm, hm!" repeated the pilot; and grew suddenly so hoarse that he could not utter another word.

"Well, it is none of my business," said the purifier, shrugging his shoulders in the approved continental style. "I am Austria's faithful servant. I have nothing to do with the Turks; but what I know, I know."

"Then you may learn now what you never knew before. Of course, the Turkish ship is after us; of course, we have given her the slip. It is all on account of that nuisance of a white-faced girl. She was wanted for the Sultan's harem. This her father would not permit. He preferred that he and his daughter should be fugitives from the empire. It is our task to reach Hungarian ground—the sooner the better, both for father and daughter. Now you have it in a nut-shell. Ask no more questions; but if you are a good Catholic, go before the glorious picture of our most holy Barbara, and if the waves have extinguished the lamp, reverently kindle it again, and do not come away till three consecrated willows have been consumed."

"I am a truly devout, orthodox Catholic always. But they say you are a Catholic only at sea, and that as soon as you touch *terra firma*, out comes your Calvinism. While afloat, you pray; but ashore, you swear like a trooper. Then they say your name is Johann Fabula. Fabula in Latin is almost equivalent to liar. In spite of that, I believe what you say, so do not get into a rage."

"Then you are wise; but now clear out, and do not come till you are called."



The brigantine was three hours behind the Saint Barbara, and the ridges of Perigrada Island hid from the pursuer's view the direction of his hoped-for prey. At the lower end of this island, the man-of-war encountered great fragments of wreck. Beyond the island there was a clear range of view, a mile or more in extent, but nothing was visible save a few fishing-smacks. Higher up were discovered the drivers, who had been left by the Barbara to rejoin the ship at Orsova. These fellows were true-hearted Servians, who secretly hated the Turks. The lieutenant of the Saloniki elicited the unfortunate news that ship and crew were swallowed up in the Perigrada whirlpool. The cut cable, and here and there a board, verified the statement.

The man-of-war turned about. As they regained the island, the sailors spied on the waves a dancing plank. They fished it up, and found a rope and hook attached to it. Drawing in the rope, up came an anchor with the name "Santa Barbara" burned in great letters on its crosspiece. It was clearly a sad catastrophe.

"Mash Allah! we cannot follow them down there."

CHAPTER V.

A RIGID EXAMINATION.

The Saint Barbara had escaped two dangers unharmed—the rocks of the Iron Gate, and the Turkish brigantine. Two others still threatened her—the Bora, and the Quarantine in Orsova.

At the upper part of the inlet near the Iron Gate, the cliffs on both sides crowded the river into a narrow channel only a hundred fathoms wide, through which the water, which was thus dangerously pressed back, flowed in a fall of twenty-eight feet. The face of the cliffs showed varied strata of rock—green, gold, and red by turns—while a primeval forest of many species of trees crowned their summits like a thick growth of hair.

It was a sight to enrage the devil himself, as the staggering ship, that had neither hands nor feet but only fins, came forward like an overloaded nut-shell, and swam

into this narrow gorge, against wind and tide, with a handful of men on board, proud of their courage and skill.

Here the Bora cannot reach them, for the crags shut off the wind—the helmsman and all the crew can rest. But the Bora bides its time!

It was afternoon. The captain had given the helm to the mate, and had gone to get something to eat, when the small bit of blue sky which was visible between the overhanging cliffs grew suddenly dark. The Bora was not to be cheated! It heralded a tempest which blotted out the firmament overhead, and made a midnight darkness in the valley below.

There was an occasional greenish flash of lightning, accompanied by a sharp peal of thunder, and then the rain fell in torrents. But the ship must go forward. Nothing was to be seen except during the swift flashes of lightning; and amidst the peals of thunder no signal-horn could be heard. But man can conquer the elements.

The pilot went to the bow, and with steel and tinder struck fire. These sparks the rain could not extinguish. The drivers of the horses can see this light also, and they know by this telegraphy what to do. It is the secret language of smugglers and sailors in this region, and has been brought to great perfection by the people living on these shores.

The storm pleased Timea. With her Turkish burnous drawn over her head, she sat by the cabin window, and asked the pilot, "Are we going into a sepulchre?"

"No," said Timar, "but we are passing by a grave. That high cliff, just now lighted up by these flashes, is called the Grave of St. Peter, and those two stone pillars near it are the two old women"—

"What old women?"

"The story goes that one was a Hungarian, and the other a Roumanian; and that they were disputing as to which of their two countries should possess St. Peter's grave, when the apostle—who could not rest because of their quarrelling—turned them both into stone."

"But how did they know it was an apostle's grave?"

"Because a great many healing herbs grow there, which are gathered and sent to foreign lands to cure the sick."

"Then they call a man an apostle who does good to others even when he is in his grave, do they?" asked Timea.

The voice of Euthyn Trikaliss was heard calling to his daughter; and she drew her head in from the window and pulled down the blind.

As Timar looked round, he saw only the face of Saint Barbara.

The ship, in spite of the storm, went steadily onward. At last she emerged from the rocky gorge; and as the cliffs were left behind, the darkness too fled away. The Bora, which had assembled the clouds, dispersed them as rapidly; and the glorious Jocherner valley spread itself out before the travellers' eyes. Both banks of the river were gay with vineyards and orchards. The evening sunlight revealed in the distance white houses, slender spires on red roofs, and a rainbow sparkling through the transparent crystal drops.

The Danube had lost its furious aspect. In majestic sweep, it took possession of its broad channel, and in the west the passengers of the ship could see Orsova on its rocky throne.

There remained the fourth and chief danger. In the midst of the Danube lay an island with towers and massive buildings, which now glowed in the sunlight like a fiery furnace; and through this, as through purgatory, every soul must pass who journeyed from the pestilential East to the confines of the untainted West. A little yellow-striped boat came rowing from the "Szkela" to the ship.

The "Szkela" is a double iron grating, through which the inhabitants of the opposite shores talk, traffic, and carry on business with each other.

The Saint Barbara dropped anchor, and waited for the approach of the boat. In this sat three armed men. Two sailors and an officer accompanied them.

Euthyn walked uneasily up and down before the cabin. Timar joined him, and said softly—

"The Custom-House officers are coming."

Euthyn took a silk purse from his girdle, and gave Timar two rolls. In each roll was a hundred ducats.

The boat now reached the ship, and the three armed men came on board. One is the inspector, whose business it is to see that nothing contraband is in the cargo. The two others are Custom-House officials, whose business it is to see that the inspector does his duty; and the third is the Quarantine officer, whose business it is as a semi-spy to see whe-

ther the two Custom-House clerks watch the inspector sufficiently.

To this duty he adds that of examining the ship's crew, to discover whether they are free from contagious disease.

It is all admirably arranged—one official controls the other, and thus all control and all are controlled.

For this important service the inspector is paid sixty Austrian kreuzers, each of the under-officials fifty kreuzers, and the Quarantine officer fifty—which are certainly moderate prices.

The inspector and Quarantine officer met on deck. The inspector scratched his ear; the Quarantine officer rubbed his nose. Without further action the inspector turned to the shipmaster, and with the two armed Custom-House clerks behind him, stood at three paces distance. As yet he is not officially informed whether the captain is free from the plague!

The examination begins:—

“Where from?”

“Galați.”

“Ship owner?”

“Athanas Brasowitsch.”

“Owner of the cargo?”

“Euthyn Trikaliss.”

“Ship's papers?”

These must be carefully handled.

First a pan of coals is brought, on which wormwood and juniper berries are scattered. The papers are fumigated over this smoke, then taken by the inspector with a pair of tongs, and held at as great a distance from him as possible, while he reads them. Then the pan is taken away and a jug of water put in its place; it is a wide-mouthed jug, into which one can easily put his fist. This is the vehicle for receiving fees. As nothing so easily spreads contagion as money, ships coming from the Levant must put their coin into this water-jug, and the sanitary and other officials of the West must stick their hands in and fish out their dues.

Timar put his doubled fist in first and drew it out empty. Then the inspector put his in and drew it out full, and put his money into his pocket. It was not necessary to examine it to see if it was the proper sum! He knew it was gold by the shape and weight of it. Even a blind man recognises ducats

But the inspector's face showed no changed expression. The Custom-House clerks next fished out their fees with business-like solemnity.

The health officer looked stern and threatening. One word from his mouth would keep ship, crew, and passengers quarantined for ten or twenty days. But his expression changed as he thrust in and drew out his clenched hand from the jug. These are evidently all serious-minded men whose only thought is how to do their duty!

The inspector sternly orders the hold to be opened. He enters it, followed by his clerks: none of the ship's officers dare accompany them. As soon as they are alone, they grin at each other. The Quarantine officer, who remains outside, is smiling too.

One of the sacks of wheat is opened by the Custom-House people.

"That seems worm-eaten enough," says the inspector. Apparently the other sacks contained wheat, and all equally worm-eaten.

A report was next in order, which the inspector wrote out and sealed with the official seal. He put no address upon another document drawn up a little later.

After the three inspectors had fully satisfied themselves that there was nothing suspicious about the cargo, they returned to the deck. It was moonlight. The inspector called the shipmaster before him, and in a hard, sharp tone informed him that he found nothing contraband on board; and then the Quarantine official in the same stiff way declared the ship free from contagion. Next in order was the exchange of papers between the ship's officers and the State officials relative to the dues paid and received.

The Custom-House officers swore to the fact that no single kreuzer had stuck to their fingers in this matter. Kreuzers, indeed! That was true; but how as to gold?

The thought passed through Timar's mind, "What if I had taken out a few gold pieces before I put the rolls into the jug? Who would have known how many I put in, and with half as many these officials would have been well paid."

Then another thought occurred to him.

"What you did was doubtless bribery. But the bribe was not yours; it was the act of Trikaliss, for which you are no more responsible than is the water-jug. Why should Trikaliss

do this? As to that you know nothing. If the ship is full of contraband goods, if Trikaliss is a political refugee, or the hero of some romantic adventure who is willing to pay dearly for a chance of escape, you have no business with the matter. But if one of those gold pieces had stuck to your fingers, you would have made yourself as guilty as he who gave the bribe. So beware of regretting your honesty."

The inspector gave permission to the vessel to proceed. As a sign that all was right, a red and white flag, with a black eagle on it, was hoisted at the masthead. And after it was thus officially declared that the ship was free from pestilence, the officer pressed Timar's hand, and said to him—

"You live in Komorn. Do you know Herr Katschuka, the chief of the commissary department of the troops there? Give him this letter when you land. There is no address upon it, but that is not necessary. You will remember his name; it sounds like a Spanish dance. Take the note to him as soon as you arrive. You will not repent of it."

And he clapped Timar on the back, as though this bound him to everlasting obligation. Then the inspectors got into their yellow-striped boat and rowed back to the "Szkela."

The Saint Barbara was free to proceed, even if her hold was full of salt, coffee, or tobacco, or if her passengers were broken out with the small-pox or leprosy from head to foot. No one now had any right to stop her on the Danube.

And indeed there was not on the ship anything infected or contraband, but something else.

Timar put the note in his breast-pocket, and wondered what it contained.

It read as follows—

"Brother-in-law! I commend the bringer of this letter to your especial consideration. He is a lucky dog!"

CHAPTER VI.

NO MAN'S LAND.

Three days passed, but Timea made no appearance on deck long enough to enter into any considerable conversation with Timar. She unaccountably avoided him. Her childish instinct whispered to her that she was under some obligation to this man, and that she had injured him in thought at least. Now and then she ran out, and of her own accord asked some question concerning the famous monument, Trajan's Tablet, hewn out of the solid rock, on the lower bank of the river; further on, another, about the beautiful cataract that comes laughing and splashing down a declivity of nearly 3,000 feet. Once she said, "It seems to me just as if we were going through a long, long dungeon passage into a region out of which we shall never be able to sail again." This was the compass of her talk. She wanted to repel the acknowledged obligation, so she excused herself on the plea of desiring to fill her sketch-book with the lovely Danube views.

Hardly had the Barbara reached the Hungarian plains when the wind, having full sweep, blew such a gale that the vessel was dashed to the other side of the stream; the horses seemed powerless; and the cry arose, "We cannot get a step further."

Trikaliss exchanged a few words in undertone with Timar, when the latter betook himself to the steersman. Fabula tied the rudders with ropes, and gave orders to rest. The boat drifted gradually into a retired, shallow inlet.

To the right, the prospect is hidden by a long, marshy, unattractive island, on which nothing appears to grow except tall poplars and willows. From the shore no structure in the shape of a human habitation is visible. To the left, the

waves of the Danube are lost in a dark reedy bank. Only in one spot is there discernible a vestige of vegetable life—a clump of silver-leaved poplars with locked branches.

In this quiet uninhabited nook the weather-beaten Saint Barbara harboured.

Another misfortune stared her crew in the face. They were entirely out of provisions, save a little sugar and coffee. The intention had been to stop at Orsova, and lay in a fresh supply of whatever was needed. The change in their course, and the unmanageable wind, left them at this island with little to hope for in the way of nourishment.

Timea, too, confined as she had been, for the last few days, to the close air of the cabin, had become quite ill, and was in a good deal of a fright.

Timar's sharp eye detected in the distance, above the tops of the trees, a thin cloud of smoke.

"I am going on a tour of inspection. Somebody must live yonder."

Taking with him some fishing-tackle and his gun, he started all alone with the skiff toward the cane-brake.

Paddling with difficulty far into the marshy stream, he came to a place beyond which he was unable to draw his boat. He tied it to a willow-tree, and pressed forward. Following the direction of the faintly curling smoke, he penetrated a thicket of poplars and encountered a morass covered with swamp-grass. He found, mingling with the grass, the wild forget-me-not, the red blossoms of the mucilaginous comfrey, and an entire flora unknown to continental botanists. What wonder that the wild bees swarmed in the holes of the decaying trees! Beyond the swamp was another wood, the land undulating, and the ground covered with hawthorn.

Timar stood still and listened. No sound, no four-footed beasts on this island. Only birds, flying insects, and frogs.

He could distinguish neither lark nor wild dove—an intimation that no grain grew there. Over yonder, where the huge wasp nests hang from the trees, and where the piping of the oriole resounds, must be fruit. Timar followed the sweet notes of the yellow finch. When the explorer had worked his way through an undergrowth of dog-wood and white-thorn, he stood still in amazement. It was paradise before him! A cultivated tract of hundreds of feet, covered with

fruit of every description—trees fairly groaning with their richly-coloured burdens. Rosy apples, luscious pears, every variety of plums, and sweet-smelling quinces;—the borders fringed with currant and berry bushes.

Through this labyrinth of trees there was no path—the roots of the trunks were carpeted with velvety grass.

Peering through the trees, he was lured by a flower-garden to approach nearer. This too was a collection of beautiful blossoms, most tastefully arranged, and quite unknown to the ordinary gardener. As he proceeded in a direct course, the looked-for habitation revealed itself. What a fantastic retreat! It fitted into a huge projecting rock, which had a deep fissure; this constituted the hearth, the pinnacle being the chimney, from which the smoke issued. A second hollow formed the cellar. Adjoining the rock was a strange combination of clay, bricks, and stones, which formed a house containing two windows, and surrounded by a pretty wooden verandah; the whole so entirely covered with vines and great grape clusters, that it would be difficult to guess the manner of its construction. Here only women lived.

CHAPTER VII.

ALMIRUS AND NARCISSA.

Timar turned his steps toward the concealed dwelling. Through the flower-garden something like a footpath which led to the house could be seen; but it was so grass-grown that the tread of anyone approaching could not be heard. And so Timar reached the verandah unnoticed. He saw no human being anywhere about. A great black dog lay before the verandah—one of that noble Newfoundland breed, which are so stately and dignified in manner that men hesitate to address them with the familiar "Thou," but involuntarily accost them with the respectful "You."

This especial dog was one of the finest specimens of the race—a muscular and giant creature, who, as he lay outstretched on the portico, filled the whole space from one pillar to another. This jetty guardian was gracious enough to pretend to be asleep: he seemed to take no notice of the

person who approached; nor did he appear to be aware of the antics of another animal, that, with impertinent boldness, was testing the patience of the large dog. This trifier was a white cat, that was turning somersaults backward and forward over the outstretched hound, varying her amusement by walking softly over his nose; till at last lying on her back before him, she took his fore-paw in her own, in order to play with it, as if it had been a kitten or puppy with which she was sporting in cat-fashion. When the dog felt the tickling of his fore-paw, he drew one foot back, and reached out the other.

Timar did not once think, "It would fare ill with me if this creature should seize me by the throat;" but he said to himself, "How pleased Timea would be with the white cat!" So long as the dog was lying at the entrance, it was not possible to go into the house, for the black creature barred the way. Timar coughed slightly, to attract attention; whereupon the big dog slightly raised his head and looked at the visitor from head to foot, with steady brown eyes which seemed human enough to frown or cajole, to smile or weep. Then he dropped his head again, as if he would say, "Only a man! I need not be disturbed!"

Timar in the meantime was reasoning with himself, "Where a chimney smokes, there must be some one in the kitchen who has made the fire!" He began therefore to address this invisible somebody, and in threefold speech, Hungarian, Servian, and Roumanian, he called out, "Good morning!" over and over again.

A woman's voice from within answered in Hungarian, "Good morning! Who is there? Come in!"

"I would be glad to do so, but the dog is in the way."

"Step over him!"

"Won't he bite me?"

"He never hurts good men."

Timar took courage, and stepped over the dog, who made no movement, except to wag his tail as if in greeting.

As Timar stepped on the verandah, he saw two doors before him, one closed and the other opening into the hollow cave which served as a kitchen. There by the hearth stood a woman, who held an iron sieve which she shook over the fire. Timar knew that no witch's incantations were the cause of this singular occupation, but that the woman was simply

popping corn; nor was the performance to be interrupted by the in-coming of any intruder. Popped corn is a very popular dish in Hungary, and I am sure none of our people need to have it explained to them. Some years ago, at a World's Fair in New York, a Yankee took a premium for it—having introduced it into his own country. These Americans find out everything! It is good eating certainly, and you can eat a great deal of it, for by the time you have chewed it up, you get hungry again!

The woman who was occupied with this kind of cookery was a dark, strong, and muscular person, above middle height, with lips firmly closed, which gave her a stern expression, yet her eyes were soft and trustful. She was about thirty years old. Her dress was unlike that of the peasant women of the region. It was without ornament, and therefore seemed above her condition.

"Come in and sit down," she said, in deep and quiet tones. Then she poured the white kernels of corn into a basket, and offered some to Timar. He willingly ate a few, and she then proffered him a draught from a pitcher, saying, "It is Armenian cherry wine, new-made!"

Timar seated himself on the chair which his hostess pushed toward him. It was crescent-shaped, with a seat woven of braided twigs, such as he had never seen elsewhere. The dog rose, and, looking at the stranger steadily, seated himself directly opposite.

The woman gave the animal a handful of the popped corn, which he crunched with great satisfaction. The white cat tried to follow his example; but the first grain she tasted stuck in her teeth, so that she wanted no more, and shook her fore-paw, as if she would brush away even the crumbs. Then she sprang towards the hearth, and curiously peeped into an unglazed pot, which steamed near the fire. Apparently, some very appetising food was cooking in this vessel.

"This is a splendid creature!" said Timar, looking at the dog. "I am surprised that he is so tame: he has not once growled at me."

"He never growls at good men, Sir. He is very gentle, and whenever a stranger comes, he knows whether he is a good man, and does not bark at him. But let a thief try to come! He would rush at him as soon as he reached the island, and woe to the man if the dog got hold of him with

his teeth. He is a terribly fierce creature at times. Last winter a gray wolf came across the ice: he wanted our kids. There, in the other room, lies the wolfskin. Our dog needed scarcely a moment to grip the enemy's throat and kill him. But a good man might sit on the dog's back, and the dog would do him no harm!"

It was very comforting to Timar to have this clear and trustworthy proof that he was a good man. Perhaps if a few of those ducats had remained sticking in Timar's pockets, this great dog would have looked at him in a different fashion.

"Now then, Sir, whence do you come, and what do you want of me?"

"First and foremost, your pardon, that I have broken over hedges and bushes into your garden. The fierce wind drove my ship down from the other shore, and forced me to take refuge near the Island Ostrova."

"That is true. From the roaring, I judge that a strong wind must be blowing."

The place was so sheltered by the primeval forest, that one could hardly tell that the wind blew unless it blew a gale.

"We must stay here until the wind goes down. But our provisions are exhausted, and so I was compelled to find out the nearest habitation, where I might ask the people if they would let me have some food, for which I will pay a good price."

"Yes; I can give you some, and I will take pay for it. I earn my living in this way. We have young kids, corn meal, cheese, and fruit. Choose what you wish. Hucksters and dealers are in the habit of coming here regularly from all the region round about, to buy our produce. We are gardeners."

Timar saw no human being save this woman; yet, as she spoke in the plural, there must be others there.

"I thank you," replied Timar, "and I will take some of all the things you have to sell. I will send the boatswain with a few sailors, to take the provisions on board. But tell me how much I must pay you; I need provisions for seven men for three days."

"Put up your purse, Sir—I never take pay in money. What should I do with money on this island? Only tempt robbers to attack me; and if there be any about, they know,

as everybody knows, that there is not a copper to be had on the island. And so we can sleep quietly. We sell only for barter. I give fruit, honey, wax, and vegetables; and I take in exchange cows, stuffs for clothing, utensils, and household furniture."

"As they do in the Australian islands?"

"Exactly so."

"Very well. On our ship we have corn and salt. Give me what I want, and I will reckon the value of what you give me, and will return something worth as much to you. I will not cheat you."

"I believe you, Sir."

"Now I have another request. On my ship I have some passengers—a gentleman and his young daughter. The girl is not used to the stormy life on shipboard, and she is ill in consequence. Can you not give these people shelter here till the wind is over?"

This request did not embarrass the woman.

"Yes; I can do so, Sir," she said. "We have two small chambers. We can crowd into one of them; and in the other, a good man, if he wishes shelter, can find what he needs—rest, if not luxury. You yourself, if you choose to stay on shore, as the two rooms will be occupied by women who are strangers to you, can sleep on the roof. There is good fresh grass, and sailors are not very luxurious people."

Timar could not understand what manner of person this woman was, who spoke in such well-chosen words, and so simply. This half grotto-like dwelling—this wild island life—gave him no solution to the riddle.

"I thank you for your kindly consent, and I will hasten at once to the ship, and bring back to you my passengers."

"That will be well. But do not go back by the way you came. Yonder, through the morass and cane-brake, it would be difficult for a lady to walk. There is a good footpath which leads down to and along the shore; it is grass-grown indeed, for it is little trodden, and this soil covers itself with grass and shrubbery quickly; but I will show you a way by which you can reach your boat. Coming back you can land at a nearer point, if you are provided with a larger skiff. I will send some one with you. Almirus!"

Timar looked round, to see from what corner of the house, or nook of the garden, this Almirus would come who was to

show him the way. But the great black dog rose, wagged his tail, and beat against the door as if it were a drum.

"Now Almirus," said the woman to the dog, "lead this gentleman to the shore." Whereupon the creature addressed growled something. With this dog-speech, and taking the flap of Timar's coat in his teeth, the animal seemed to say most plainly, "Come along, then!"

"So this is the Almirus who is to guide me. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Almirus," jested Timar; and he took his hat and gun, bade the woman adieu, and followed the dog.

Almirus, still holding the coat in his teeth, led his guest through the fruit-orchard, where Timar had to be on his guard not to step on the fallen plums. The white cat followed, as if curious to know where Almirus was taking the stranger. She ran, now before, and now behind the pair, in the soft grass.

When they had reached the edge of the orchard, a clear musical voice called from somewhere, "Narcissa!"

The voice was that of a young girl. In its tones were reproof, tenderness, and modesty. It was a most sympathetic voice.

Timar looked round him. He wondered, first, who had spoken, and next, who was spoken to. Who had been called? This he ascertained when at the summons the white kitten sprang away, and, with her tail waving, ran straight up the trunk of a pear-tree, amidst whose green foliage Timar saw the gleam of a white dress. But this was all he could discover, for Almirus, by a low growling, seemed to say very plainly in dog-speech, "What business have you to play the spy?" and Timar, if he did not wish to leave a part of his coat in the dog's teeth, must follow his guide.

Almirus led him down the grass-grown path along the shore to the place where Timar had left his boat. Two woodcock flew, with long-drawn whistling cry, towards the island. Timar thought instantly what a good supper they would make for Timea. He raised his gun to his shoulder, and with two shots brought the birds down.

But the next moment he stood no longer on his feet. Almirus had, at the report of the gun, seized him by the throat, and flung him to the earth. The man tried to rise; but he found that he had a mighty adversary to deal with, with whom it was no jesting matter. Almirus did him no

harm, but held him by the throat, and would not permit him to rise.

Timar tried in vain to appease the dog, called him pet names—his best friend—and declared that no sportsman had ever before been game for his own dog: it would be better for him to go and find the fallen woodcock. But the brute remained implacable.

The dangerous situation was brought to an end by the woman who lived near; for, hearing the report of the gun, she came running, and, while yet at a distance, called Almirus by name, whereupon the dog let go the throat of his excellent good friend.

"O, Sir," cried the woman, breaking her way through thickets and briars to reach the scene of the tragedy, "I forgot to tell you that you must not fire your gun, or Almirus would attack you. A shot makes him furious. O, how foolish I was not to tell you!"

"No matter," replied Timar, laughing. "But the dog is a wonderful gamekeeper. I shot a brace of woodcock, because I thought they would make a good supper for my passengers."

"I will find the birds for you. But now go to your boat; and when you return leave your gun behind you, for I assure you if Almirus sees it in your hand, he will tear it from you; it will be no joke, I can tell you."

"I have discovered that. He is a powerful beast. Before I had time to think of defending myself, I was lying flat on the ground. It is lucky that he did not bite my throat."

"O, he does not bite human beings. But if any one tries to make a defence against him, he seizes the man's arm in his teeth, and holds him as if in a vice, and so he keeps him till we come. Good-bye now, and return soon."

Before an hour had passed, the large boat returned to the island with new guests.

Timar, during the journey from the ship to the shore, told Timea of Almirus and Narcissa, in order to make the child forget her terror of the fog and the water. All her fears were over as she set foot on the island.

Timar went forward as guide. Timea followed, leaning on the arm of Trikaliss. Two sailors came next, bearing bags on their backs, whose contents were to be used as barter.

Even at a distance they heard the bark of Almirus. It

was his mode of greeting, by which he was accustomed to welcome the approach of good friends. At the same time he sprang forward to meet them.

When Almirus had gone half way to greet the company, he first barked round the whole party, then made acquaintance with each one separately—with the boatswain, each sailor, and Timea. As the dog came close to the girl, he tried to lick her hand. But, on approaching Trikaliss, Almirus ceased barking, and then began to sniff at him from his feet upward, nor would he leave his heels, but smelt of the stranger and shook his head, and drew his ears together till they actually clapped. Evidently he was making examinations and observations on some important point. The mistress of the island-habitation awaited her guests upon the verandah; and as they approached between the trees, she called loudly, "Nafmi!"

Someone within the garden came out at this summons. It was a young girl, who stepped forward from two rows of tall raspberry bushes, which rose like a green wall, interweaving with each other their topmost twigs. She had a childish face and a childish form; she wore a white skirt and white jacket, and held up the front of her dress in apron-fashion; for she had filled it with various sorts of fruits which she had picked up under the trees.

As she came out of the green thicket, there was something idyllic in her appearance. The delicate bloom on her cheek was like the tender hue of the blush rose; and as the colour flushed her face even to her brow, she wore the glowing carmine of the red rose on her girlish countenance. On her pure pale forehead goodness itself seemed written, and her expressive blue eyes and downcast lids were in harmony with her air of innocence. Her abundant hair fell in natural curls, of a golden-brown chestnut colour, and one tress, carelessly pushed aside, revealed her finely cut ear.

There was uncommon gentleness in the expression of her features. Each line might not be perhaps the ideal of a sculptor, but around her head and figure, taken as a whole, there floated an intangible something which, at the first glance, was sympathetic, and grew more and more attractive the longer one saw her. Her dress was a little disarranged on her shoulders, but, as if to repair this fault, the white cat sat there, rubbing her face against the maiden's cheek.

The girl's small white feet were bare, but she walked on tapestry—royal tapestry; that is to say, on the green grass, through which—here and there—peeped the blue Veronica and the red geranium.

Trikaliss, Timea, and Timar stood at the end of the raspberry bushes waiting for the child's approach.

She greeted the strangers cordially, and offered them some of the fruit which she had brought—beautiful red-cheeked Bergamot pears. She offered them to Timar first. He selected the ripest and gave them to Timea—whereupon both girls shrugged their shoulders a little uneasily; Timea, because just then the white cat mewed—and Naomi, because she had not brought the fruit for Timea.

"O, you careless child!" cried the mistress of the cabin, "Why don't you put the fruit into a basket? To carry it round in your apron! O, you simpleton!"

The child, with flaming cheeks, ran to her mother, who still chid her softly, so that others should not hear. Then, kissing her daughter's brow, she said aloud,

"Now go and take what the sailors have brought; put the meal into the store-room, and fill up their pots with honey and their baskets with fruit. Then select for them two kids."

"I will not choose the kids for them," replied the girl. "They may do that for themselves."

"Foolish child!" answered her mother. "You would like to keep all the flock, and never let one be killed, I know. Well, then, let the strangers choose for themselves, and no one can complain. I will meantime get supper ready."

Naomi called the sailors, and opened the fruit and the store-room; these rooms were hollowed out of the rock, and separated by different doors.

This rock, out of which the inner part of the island was formed, was foreign to the local formation, which consisted of chalkstone in the valley, and of dolomite rocks and pebbles in the river bed. This block was full of holes which its present possessor had known how to utilise:—the largest for a kitchen, since it had a chimney-like opening; the lower one for a cellar; one above for a dovecote; still others for winter and summer storehouses. They had made a home in this providential block of stone, and lived in it like wild birds in a nest.

The girl carried on her barter deftly and justly. At the close of the bargain she gave the sailors a draught of wine, and asked them to come again if they needed anything further. Then she returned to the kitchen.

She waited for no orders, but began to lay the table. This, which was placed on the verandah, she spread with a straw mat, and then she brought out four plates, knives, forks, and spoons.

But for the fifth person?

She must sit at another one—a veritable cat's-table.

Before the doorstep of the verandah was a wooden bench. Here Naomi put her own plate, knife and fork, and also two wooden trenchers for Almirus and Narcissa. These latter needed no knives and forks. After the first table was served the food was passed to the second. Naomi took good care of her table companions: she put small bits on Narcissa's plate, and larger ones with bones on Almirus's. Then she served herself; but the four-footed guests waited at Naomi's bidding till the food was cool enough to eat. However much the dog might prick up his ears, or Narcissa sit on Naomi's shoulder, they were trained to obedience.

The mistress of the island had wished to treat her guests in Hungarian fashion, and she did not like to have Timar think that her supper depended on his brace of woodcock. She had indeed cooked them, but they were on a dish by themselves expressly for the young lady—while, for the rest of the party, she had prepared a stew of sucking pig seasoned with pepper. Timar did justice to this dish, but Trikaliss declined it, on the plea of having eaten enough, and Timea rose from the table. She did this suddenly but naturally, for she had cast longing glances at the other table, and it was not at all strange that she should suddenly rise and go to join the other party and seat herself beside Naomi. The girls soon made friends with each other in child-fashion.

Timea, indeed, did not speak Hungarian, nor did Naomi understand Greek; but between them sat Narcissa, who spoke both languages equally well.

The white kitten understood what was meant when Timea stroked her back with a soft hand, and said, "Horaion gation!" Then she snuggled out from Naomi's arms over into Timea's, rubbed her head against Timea's cheek, then opening her little red mouth with its sharp pointed teeth,

with false eyes she looked coaxingly on her new friend. Next she sprang to Timea's shoulder, crept round her neck, and went over to Naomi, and then came back to Timea. Naomi was pleased to find her favourite so much liked by the stranger. But this first pleasure vanished when she saw that Timea was almost too fond of her pet, and kept her too much to herself, kissing and patting her; and this jealousy grew when she discovered that Narcissa so readily became faithless to her old mistress, and so willingly received the caresses of the stranger; and even when Naomi called Narcissa, the cat scarcely heard her name, while she heard well enough "Horaion gation!" (pretty pussy!).

Naomi was angry, and took Narcissa by the tail to draw her back. Then Narcissa turned and scratched the hands of her mistress with sharp claws.

Timea had a serpent-shaped bracelet on her wrist. When the cat scratched Naomi, the stranger guest took off her pretty ornament, and tried to put it into Naomi's hand. She apparently wanted to do something to make up for the girl's pain. But Naomi misunderstood the act, and thought that the strange young lady wished to buy Narcissa with the bracelet, and Narcissa was not for sale.

"I do not want the bracelet. I will not give you Narcissa for it! You may keep your trinkets. Narcissa is mine! Come here, Narcissa!"

And when the cat would not obey the call, Naomi unseen gave her a little slap, whereupon the kitten sprang in fright over the bench, and ran spitting and hissing up in a nut tree, where she sat mewling reproachfully.

Timea and Naomi looked each other in the face, and each read a dreamy foreboding in the glance of the other, as men sometimes close their eyes for a moment in sleep, and live years in a second's time, yet when they awake forget it all, or remember only that they have dreamed something.

These two girls felt in the exchange of glances that there was to be some secret connection between their lives, that some mysterious tie was to unite their destinies, either for joy or sorrow—and yet perhaps they might never be conscious that they owed this to each other.

Timea rose and gave the bracelet, which Naomi had refused, to the mistress of the house. Then she sat down beside her father, and leaned her head on his shoulder.

Timar explained to their hostess that Timea wished to give the ornament to Naomi, and that it was made of gold.

As soon as he said "it is gold," the island woman flung it down in terror from her hand, as if it had indeed been a serpent, and looked wildly at Naomi, saying only, "No, I thank you."

Suddenly Almirus attracted everybody's attention. He sprang up, raised his head as if he saw something, and then began to utter a hoarse growl. It was like the loud roar of a lion. He muttered angry dangerous sounds, as if he gave warning of an attack upon someone, and yet he did not run forward, but stood by the verandah with his fore paws extended, and tearing up the earth with his hind feet.

The mistress of the house turned pale. A figure approached in the footpath between the trees.

"The dog barks in this way only at the presence of one man. Yonder he comes! It is indeed he!"

CHAPTER VIII.

VOICES IN THE NIGHT.

He who was advancing from the strand was a man still young in years. A loose blouse and trousers of pilot-cloth, a red woollen neck-kerchief, and a bright Turkish fez constituted his attire. His countenance was handsome. Had he been seated quietly before an artist, one would have exclaimed, "A model for a hero!" But as he came along in that cool, indifferent manner, the first thought of every one was, "A spy surely!" Regular features, large black eyes, thick curly hair, and beautiful lips; but the wrinkles about the eyes, the indentations at the corners of the mouth, and the uneasy, searching, and side-long glances betrayed the sensualist, a slave to his appetites.

Almirus barked lustily at the new-comer, who shuffled

along lazily, as one who well knows that he is at the mercy of others for his vindication.

Naomi tried to call off the dog; but to her efforts the dog paid no heed; so she took him by both ears and drew him back. He growled and whined, and then began barking again. Naomi finally placed her foot on Almirus's great shaggy head, pressing him to the ground. The dog accommodated himself to this situation by stretching himself out. Giving a half-smothered snarl, he bore his mistress's foot as if it were an inevitable burden, never to be shaken off.

The stranger whistled. Then, though still some distance off, he began to talk.

"Have you that cursed cur still? Havn't you given him away yet? I shall have to get rid of the ugly brute."

As he drew near to Naomi, he raised his hand with a cordial familiar smile, as if to pinch her cheek. Naomi escaped him—as quick as a flash.

"Well, my little bride, are you as well as ever? How you have grown since I saw you last!"

Naomi glared at the speaker, with contracted brows, parted lips, and angry mien; her complexion changed colour; she could look positively ugly, if she set out for it. He paid no attention to this return to his demonstration, but exclaimed,

"How beautiful you have grown!"

The girl looked at her dog.

"Down, Almirus!"

The new-comer then stepped upon the verandah, with all the assurance of being at home; his first duty was to kiss the hand of the mistress of the cottage. He then greeted Timar with hearty condescension, made a polite bow to Trikaliss and Timea; and now there was a stream of uninterrupted talk from his lips.

"Good evening, my dear mother-in-law. Your most humble servant, Herr Supercargo. Allow me to greet you, ladies and gentlemen. I am Theodore Kristyan, knight and captain, future son-in-law to this respected lady. Our parents were the best of friends, heart and hand. They betrothed Naomi and me in their lifetime. Annually I visit my dear ones, to see for myself how my bride is growing in her summer freshness. I am pleased beyond measure to see you here, with this well-born gentleman, whose name I believe is Timar,

and whom I have already had the good fortune to meet. And it seems to me that the other gentleman ——”

“Understands only Greek,” interrupted Timar, who thrust his hands deep into his pockets, to make it absolutely impossible for the stranger to express his joy of a previous acquaintance by a shaking of hands.

Theodore Kristyan troubled himself no longer, but turned his attention to something more tangible on the table.

“Ah! it looks as if I had been just expected; a glorious supper, and the table laid for four; but the fourth place empty. Stewed pork! I have a weakness that way. Thanks, mamma, ladies, and gentlemen. I am properly grateful, and will do all honour to this ample meal;” and without further invitation he placed himself in the seat left by Timea, and generously offered his favourite dish to Trikaliss again and again. He could not repress his astonishment that a human creature existed under the sun who did not glory in stewed pork.

Timar arose from the table, and said to the housewife, “My passenger and his daughter are tired to death;—they really need sleep more than food; will you kindly show them to their beds?”

“Things will be ready immediately,” replied the woman. “Naomi, assist the young lady when she undresses.”

Naomi arose, and followed her mother and her two guests to the little rooms in the rear. Timar also arose from the table, leaving the new-comer, who applied himself with double energy, disposing of everything eatable within his reach, talking between bites to Timar who stood out of sight behind him, and at the same time throwing at Almirus the bones picked clean.

“You must have had a devil of a voyage in such a wind. I wonder how you got past Trachtalia and the Gate! Here, Almirus, stop your growling there! Do you not remember, Sir, that we met at Galatz? It was ——”

He turned round suddenly, and found himself entirely alone.

Timar had gone to the loft to make himself a fragrant bed of new-mown grass. Almirus had settled himself in a comfortable hole outside.

Timar stretched his tired body at full length on the sweet-smelling hay, with the expectation of a refreshing night's rest. He deceived himself. He closed his eyes in vain. He saw and heard over again all his recent experiences. Mountains,

rivers, threatening rocks, whirlpools, strange women, black dogs, white cats—all besieged his brain like chaos. The wind blew, the whip snapped, the dog barked, gold clinked, men laughed and shouted and swore in his ears all at once.

Soon he heard talking in the room below; he recognised the voices. The woman of the house and the new-comer were in conversation. The lath-partition was so thin, that he could distinguish every word, even though spoken in low, dull tones. Now and then the man's voice was raised to a louder pitch.

"Now, Mamma Theresa, have you much money?" the man asked.

"You know I have none at all. You are aware that what I sell is in exchange, and that I never take money for anything."

"Then you are very foolish. It does not please me, and I do not believe you either."

"I am telling you the truth; whoever comes to me for fruit, brings with him some produce or wares of which I can make good use. What could I do with money?"

"*I'd* know what. You ought to give it to *me*. But you never think of that. And if I marry Naomi, I won't be paid in dried plums. You are a cruel, bad mother—you do not think of your daughter's happiness at all. You do not lift your finger to help me get a good place. I might have the position of first dragoman to the embassy, but I have not the means for my travelling expenses. My pocket was picked of what little I had, and now I must lose this golden opportunity."

In a quiet tone the woman replied—

"I do not believe that you have been mentioned for any position which you can lose. That you are in some employment may be true. You may be a spy, for aught I know. I do not think you have any money; but you have not been robbed."

"You do not believe anything," he said angrily. "Neither do I believe that you have no money. You *must* have some. Smugglers are in the habit of landing here, and they always pay well."

"Do not speak so loud. Smugglers do tarry on the island; they either do not come near my cabin, or if they do, it is only to buy my fruit with their salt. Do you want salt?"

"I am in no mood for jesting.—And then, such rich travellers as you have sleeping here to night!"

"I do not know whether they are rich or poor."

"Don't make such a long face. Demand money; I must have it; get it for me. Give up your crazy Australian truck. Earn ducats if you want to be at peace with me. Otherwise I have only to say the word, and you know well enough you are ruined."

"Speak lower, you miserable wretch."

"Oh, now you are begging me to speak softly! If you want me to keep quiet, give me money."

"I tell you I have none. Accursed to me is everything in the shape of money. Here, look through the chests and boxes; if you find anything valuable, you are welcome to it."

Evidently he took Theresa at her word, and after moving about said, "What's this? A bracelet?"

"Yes, the strange young lady gave it to Naomi, just before you came. If you like it, take it."

"It is worth ten ducats; that is better than nothing. Do not pity Naomi; when I marry her, she shall have one for each arm, worth thirty at least—inlaid with sapphire—no, with emeralds. Which do you prefer, sapphires or emeralds?" And the young man laughed at his own wit. His question remained unanswered.

"And now, dear Mamma Theresa, make ready a comfortable bed for your future son-in-law, for your dear Theodore, and I'll have sweet dreams of my Naomi."

"I cannot make a bed for you inside; you know there is not a room anywhere but here, and I will not have you here. Naomi is a child no longer. Go out on the verandah; there is the linden-wood lounge. Naomi, give him that pillow, and here is my blanket. Pleasant dreams."

"That miserable cur is outside; he will bite me; I cannot trust myself near him."

"I'll chain him, poor fellow! He is never chained except when you are on the island."

Mother Theresa could scarcely coax Almirus out of his den. He knew instinctively that the chain and collar were inevitable at this time; still he was accustomed to yield to his mistress always, and he gradually allowed himself to be fastened. It gave the dog all the greater grudge against the author of his imprisonment.

When Theresa went in and left Theodore on the verandah, the dog began to bark at Kristyan angrily; he pawed back and forth, to the full length of his fastening, and pulled and twisted with all his might to break the chain or uproot the bush to which he was tied. Now that the beast could not get at the man, Theodore tantalised him. It afforded him pleasure to work the animal into such a rage that he almost foamed at the mouth. He went to within a foot of the dog, spat in his face, and mimicked his bark. "Bow wow! wouldn't you like to get at me? here's my nose, bite it off. Why don't you break your chain? There is something for a muzzle," throwing a handful of sand at him. "Come, snap off my finger."

Almirus, in the midst of his fury, suddenly stopped barking. The dog seemed to have come to his senses. The wiser, thought he, always yields. The quadruped gave one toss of his head at the biped, as if in disdain, and then turned to his hole and was perfectly still.

Timar saw all this. He could not sleep. He left open the window in the loft. It was a moonlight night, and after the dog quieted himself, the deepest stillness reigned: a melancholy stillness, which the moonshine, and an occasional sound in the solitude, rendered more and more strange.

It is the kingdom of swamps and sandbanks. Far in the distance the dying flutter of the night-bird whispers his good-night. The wind, in the tall branches of the high poplars, plays a doleful dirge, as on the *Æolian* harp. The wild water-spaniel howls at intervals like a crying babe. Deep in the wood the fairies were having the flambeaux dance. The will-o'-the-wisps were chasing each other in crowds about the roots of the decaying trees. The flower-garden was fairly deluged by the shining rays of the moon. The majestic mallows, with their rosette-like blossoms, were swarming with silver-winged and variegated nocturnal butterflies and moths. What a wonderful calm! If only no human voice would disturb the silence.

But some bad spirit had robbed others beside Timar of their rest, for he soon heard from one room a long-drawn deep sigh; from another, "O Allah!" Suddenly Timar was prompted by some strange impulse to go out into the garden. Slipping on his coat he glided down the rope-ladder, and soon reached the ground.

The same thought must have taken possession of another. As Timar reached the corner of the house, and in a gentle suppressed tone spoke the name of "Almirus," another voice from the opposite direction gave the same note, as if the one was the ghostly echo of the other. Both persons stepped forward in surprise. The second was Theresa.

"You left your bed?" she asked.

"I cannot sleep."

"What did you want of Almirus?"

"I admit frankly, I suddenly conceived the notion that that fellow had poisoned him—the dog grew quiet so quickly and strangely."

"The same thought brought me here. Almirus!"

The dog came out of the hole at once, and wagged his tail.

"No, there is nothing the matter with him. The man has gone, any way. The bed on the verandah is untouched. Come, Almirus, let me unchain you."

The great dog pawed his mistress' arm as soon as he was free; he sprang on her neck, and licked her cheeks; he then turned to Timar, and laid a heavy paw in the open hand offered to him. He knew his friends! Then he shook his shaggy coat, rolled on his back, throwing himself from one side to the other, and finally stretched himself at full length, close to them both.

Theresa came nearer to Timar. "Do you know that man?" she asked.

"I met him once at Galatz. He boarded my ship, but he acted so queerly I could not tell whether he was a smuggler or a spy. After a time I forbade him the deck. That is the extent of our acquaintance."

"What led you to think that he meant to poison Almirus?"

"Every word that is said in the room below can be heard in the loft. I could not help being a party to your conversation."

"You heard then with what he threatened me?—that a word from him would be my destruction?"

"Yes, I heard it."

"And what do you think of us now? Probably that the burden of a crime, or the disgrace of a dishonoured name, has banished us from the world to this solitary island, so

that here we may be hidden from the eyes of men, and from the power of the law. Tell me, do you not think this or something worse?"

"Truly, good woman, I am not racking my brains about it. You hospitably opened your cottage to me for one night. For this I owe you heartfelt thanks. To-morrow, if the wind moderates, we shall go on, and I in all likelihood will never again think of what I have seen or heard on this island."

"But I should not like you to go away in that manner. I cannot tell why, but since I first looked into your eyes I have felt for you an indescribable respect. It would trouble me sadly if you should leave with these impressions of suspicion and disesteem. You have inadvertently heard things about which, in justice to myself, you ought to be enlightened. The night is peaceful; just the kind of a night to relate the secrets of a bitter life. Please let me tell you all, and when you realise what a story this island and this cabin here have, I do not believe you will say again, that you are going on your journey to-morrow to remember nothing about our story or ourselves. No; you will be sure to come back some day, when your business calls you this way, and you will stop over to rest a night under this quiet roof. Sit down by me on these verandah steps, and listen to the story of our little home."

CHAPTER IX.

HISTORY OF THE INHABITANTS.

"Twelve years ago we lived in Pancsova, where my husband was a city official. His name was Bellovary. He was a young, handsome, and active man, and we loved each other greatly. I was twenty-two, he thirty years of age. We had one child, a daughter, whom we christened Naomi. We were not rich, but in comfortable circumstances. My husband had a good position, a pretty house, a nice orchard and garden. I was an orphan when he married me, and I brought a good dowry with me into his home, so we could live very pleasantly.

"My husband had a dear friend, Maxim Kristyan, whose son is the man who was here just now. At that time he was a boy thirteen years old, and a bright, clever, and handsome lad. His mind was as keen and sharp as lightning. While my little girl was still a child in arms, the two fathers used to say, "Our children shall marry each other." And as time went on, it used to amuse and please me, when the boy would take my girl by the hand, and say to her innocently, "Will you live with me?" and my child would laugh gleefully in assent.

"Maxim Kristyan was a merchant, but not in ordinary business; it was his occupation to deal in other men's goods, trying to make money by sales on commission. He had no stock of his own. If he made money, well; but if he lost, he had no property to fall back upon.

"He generally was fortunate; so he thought there was no better business than his. In the spring he went into the country, and bought the crop of the farmers as it stood, and then sold it by contract to wholesale merchants, to be delivered in the autumn.

"He had an especial agent, Athanas Brasowitsch, a wholesale dealer at Komorn. This man advanced him large sums of money in the spring, and took as security the crops which were to be delivered at a certain price, stipulated between them. And this business brought in a good profit to Kristyan; but I have since often thought that it was not really a business, but a kind of chance, to sell what as yet did not exist in the world. Brasowitsch was in the habit of advancing large sums of money to Kristyan, and as he had no property besides his own house, he was obliged to get other persons to be security for him. My husband cheerfully endorsed his notes for him, for he was a good friend of Kristyan's, and owned his own house and land. Kristyan was a man of reckless temperament, and while my husband sat all day at his desk in the office, Kristyan smoked in the cafés, and gossiped with friends of his own ilk.

"At last the scourge of God fell upon the land. It was the fearful year of 1816. In the spring the crops stood full of promise in all the fields of the country. Everybody expected an abundant harvest. Every commission merchant thought himself lucky if he could engage to deliver grain at four guldens a bushel. Then came a rainy summer. It

poured continuously day after day for sixteen weeks. The wheat rotted on the stalk. In this district, regarded as a second Canaan, famine was imminent, and the price of wheat rose to twenty guldens. And even at that rate wheat was not to be had, for the farmers kept it as seed-corn."

"I remember the time," said Timar. "I began the commission business that year."

"Then Maxim Kristyan could not meet his engagements with Brasowitsch. The difference between the price of grain contracted for, and the current rates, was enormous. Kristyan collected all the money he could get, borrowing from many who believed his credit good, and he disappeared one night from Pancsova. He took with him everything he possessed, except his only son. He could easily turn all his property into money, and he left nothing behind for which he cared. O! why should there be gold in the world, when it tempts men to such mischief, if they love nothing but money? His obligations fell upon his friends who had been security for him. My husband was one of them.

"And now Athanas Brasowitsch demanded the fulfilment of the contracts. It is true he had advanced money to the defaulting Kristyan, and we begged him to let us off by repayment of this sum. We could have sold half of all we owned, and thereby have met this claim. But Brasowitsch had no mercy: he demanded the fulfilment of the contract. The question was not how much cash he had advanced, but how much the contract was worth to him. This document, if carried into effect, would bring him fivefold profit. We begged and entreated him to be satisfied with less, for to him it was not a question of loss, but of greater or less gain. But he was inexorable. He insisted on the full satisfaction of all the demands of the contract. Of what value are religion and faith—whether in Christian or Jewish creeds—if such demands can be permitted? The case was taken into court, and the judge decided against us; so our house, our lands, our whole possessions were levied upon, seized, and sold at auction. But of what worth are law and human society, if a man can be beggared to pay a debt of which he has not had one penny himself?—and he be plunged into misery for the sake of a third person, who, laughing in his sleeve, runs away?

"We tried in every way to save ourselves from absolute

Budapest

ruin. My husband went to ~~Ofen~~ and Vienna to seek redress. We knew that the man who had cheated us had gone with our money to Turkey, and we tried to have him found and brought back, that we might commence a suit against him. But everywhere we got the answer, 'There we have no jurisdiction.' But of what use are emperors, ministers, and statesmen, if they have no power to protect citizens in their need?

"After this fearful blow, which brought us to beggary, my husband shot himself through the heart. He could not bear to see the poverty of his family, the tears of his wife, the pale and hungry face of his child!

"But the worst was not yet over. I was homeless and a beggar; and now they wished to make me deny God also. The widow of a suicide, I implored the priests in vain to bury my husband. The Dean was a severe man, a very saintly man, who was devoted to religion. He refused my husband an honourable burial. I was forced to look on while a dear form which I had worshipped was carried in a cart through the town, and, without funeral rites, flung into a trench. But of what use are priests, if there is no pardon for sin? Of what use is the whole world? For me, there was nothing left except to become a suicide and a murderess—to kill myself and my child. I wrapped little Naomi in a blanket, pressed her to my heart, and went to the banks of the Danube. I was alone; no human being was near me. I went up and down the shore to see where the water was deepest. Suddenly there came a pull at my dress, and I was drawn back. I looked to see who was there. It was this dog—my last friend on earth. This happened on the shore of the Ostrovaer island, where we had a small summer-house and an orchard. The official seal was on all the doors, and I could only get into the kitchen or wander about in the garden.

"Then I sat down on the shore, and began to think—What am I? A human being—a woman. Am I worse than a brute? Was there ever a dog that drowned itself and its young? No; I will not kill myself nor my child! I will live in spite of everything! I will bring up my child! But how shall I live? As the wolves and the gypsies do! I will beg from the earth, from the water, and from the trees; but from men I will ask nothing! My poor husband had

often spoken of a little island which had been formed in the Danube some fifty years before—an island on which he had gone gunning, and where he had found shelter from a storm, in a hollow rock. He said this spot was No Man's Land. The Danube had made it, and none of the governments knew of its existence, and none of the countries had a right to add it to their territory. There no one sowed or reaped—land, grass, trees belonged to nobody. Why should I not take possession of it? I resolved to do so. How should I live there? That I did not yet know, but necessity would teach me. I had a boat left me. The sheriff had not taken that. Into this boat I put Naomi and Almirus, and rowed to the island. When I set foot on the shore, a strange feeling overcame me. It was as if I had forgotten all that had happened to me in the world before. The bees hummed in the meadows, the hazel bushes blossomed in the thickets, the water caltrop mirrored itself in the river. On the shore were crabs, on the tree-trunks snails, and in the marshes the manna-bearing tussock-grasses. My God, here was a well-spread table for me! The thickets were full of young fruit-trees. The goldfinches had brought the seeds over from the neighbouring islands, and apples were ripening on the trees, and raspberries hung on the bushes. Now I knew what I could make of this island—a paradise! The work to be done here could be done by the hand of a woman. I found out the rock and its natural grotto. In the hollow cave I found a bed of hay. My husband had made it there to sleep on. It was my rightful inheritance—my widow's dower. I laid my child down upon this couch, and said to Almirus, 'Stay, and keep watch till I return.'

"Then I rowed back to my old house. The verandah of our summer-house had a canvass awning. This I took down; it might be useful as a tent, or even as clothing. In this I packed whatever I could find, garden-tools, housekeeping utensils, and so on—and made up a bundle as large as I could carry. I had come to my husband's house with a good dowry, and I left it with only what I could carry on my back; and perhaps even this was stealing—I could not tell. As to what was right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, all was confusion in my head. From the garden I took cuttings of fruit-trees and various shrubs, and put them in my apron. Then I kissed the drooping twigs of the weeping-willow under which I had

so often sat and dreamed. All was over. I went back to my island.

“On the way two things had worried me; the first was that probably there were snakes on the island, and I was afraid they might harm Naomi; the next was, how I should feed Almirus, even if I and my child could live on honey, nuts, and manna. Such articles of food as these would not support the great dog, and I needed him so much—for without him I should die of terror in the desert-place. When I reached the grotto, I saw at the entrance a snake bitten in two, and the dog lay before Naomi, wagging his tail and licking his chops, as if he meant to say, ‘I have had a good meal.’ And from that time on he hunted snakes daily, and fed upon them. In the winter he found them in their holes. My faithful friend (for so he was) had found out how to support himself, and how to free me from the objects of my fear and dread at the same time. It was an indescribable feeling, nearer bliss than pain, when we passed the first night together on that island, where there was no one with me but God, my child, and a dog. I covered myself with the canvass, and did not wake till the birds began to twitter in the morning.

“Then I set about my work—the gathering of manna. Poor women often go out early among the rushes where the grain-bearing plants grow, and pluck their secret harvest—the God-given food of the poor. Then, too, I had wild fruits, honey, ground-nuts, crabs, the eggs of wild ducks, snails, and dried mushrooms, for our daily nourishment. Blessed be God Who provides for the poor so generously! For two years I lived on this food, and thanked Him Who fed us as He feeds the birds of the air.

“But I worked untiringly to make the most of what I had about me. I planted the cuttings of my fruit-trees, and the seeds of my nut-trees, raspberry-bushes, and vines. I planted cotton, too; and from the raw stuff, I wove on a chair of willow twigs the coarse garments that we wore. I made hives of cane-brake and reed-grass for the wild bees, and in the first year I had honey and honeycomb as articles of barter. Millers and smugglers came often to the island, and they helped me with my heavy work, and did me no harm. They knew I had no money, and for the produce I sold them they paid me in labour and things I needed. They knew I would not take money. And when my fruit-trees began to bear,

I was rich indeed. This soil is so fertile that I often have two crops a-year. I have pear-trees that bear twice in a season. I have learned their secrets, and know how to profit by this knowledge. A dog understands what a human being says to him; and I believe the trees know when one loves them and treats them tenderly, and they bear gratefully a harvest in return. They are wise creatures; they have souls; and I regard any one as a murderer who cuts one down. These fruit-trees are my friends. I live by them. People from the neighbouring islands come to get my fruit, bringing me articles that I need in exchange. I have a horror of money, and will never accept it. That accursed gold, which drove me out of the world and my husband out of life—I never want to see it again!

“Of course I have laid aside for bad years fruits, honey, and wine. I have stores of produce, but no money. During the twelve years that I have lived on this island not a copper have I had in my fingers. Many people know of our being here, but no one betrays or troubles us. Why should anybody wish to injure me, since I harm nobody?

“For twelve years I have never seen churches or priests. I scarcely know if I have any creed, and Naomi knows nothing of such things. I have taught her to read and write. I have taught her also of Moses, of Jesus, and of God, as best I could do;—of an omniscient, compassionate, sin-forgiving God; of Jesus, majestic in His humility, glorious in His sufferings, Godlike in His humanity; of Moses, the leader and deliverer of a people, taking them from slavery to freedom, preaching good deeds and the brotherhood of men; but of a revengeful Deity, loving blind faith alone, of a tax-gathering and persecuting Jesus, of a selfish, avaricious, hate-kindling Moses, such as books and preachers, bells and litanies mention;—of such things Naomi knows nothing.

“Now that you know who and what we are, let me explain what it is with which this man threatens us. He is the son of that defaulter for whom my husband was security, the one who drove him to despair and suicide. At that time the lad was thirteen years old, and it is no wonder that the youth has become a wicked man. Deserted, deceived by the father whom he had revered, thrown on the charity of strangers, branded as the son of a criminal, he naturally became what he is. Not long after his father's flight, he went to Turkey.

He said he was going to find his father—some think he joined him; others, not; but as to his own statements nobody believes them, for he never tells the truth. He goes hither and yon—now here, now there—always cheating and lying. He speaks ten languages, each like a native. One day he pretends to be a merchant, then a soldier, then a sailor. To-day he is a Turk, to-morrow a Greek. He has figured as a Polish count, as the bridegroom of a Russian princess, and as a travelling doctor. What he really is nobody knows. But one thing is certain: he is a paid spy—a spy for the Turks, for the Austrians, for the Russians, all three: he is paid by them all, and deceives them all. Several times a year he visits this island. Whence he comes I never know. But I do know that he is a vagabond and spendthrift. I have food here for him, and I have a young and blooming girl whom he loves to torment by calling her his bride. Naomi hates him. But I do not believe Theodore Kristyan comes to this place solely on our account. This island may have secrets of which I know nothing. He is a man of evil nature, a paid spy, and every wickedness may be expected from him. He knows that I and my daughter have usurped this spot. I have no real right to it. He tyrannises over us, with the threat that if we do not do as he wishes, he will denounce us to some government, and as soon as he reveals the existence of a territory not included in any treaty, the authorities will at once take possession of our island, and before the legal right to our No Man's Land is established we shall be banished. A word from this man is enough to exile me from this Eden—for we shall be given up to officials and priests. Now you understand the bitter sighs and groans which you heard me utter, and what prevented my sleep."

Timar gazed at the moon, which was shining between the poplars.

"This man can indeed make us miserable," resumed Theresa. "He need only make known in Vienna or Stamboul that a new island exists in the Danube, and that will be our ruin. But I am prepared even for that. Years ago, when the Turks were fighting the Servian Prince Milosch, some smugglers hid three kegs of powder in the broom-corn on the island. I found the kegs, and brought them to this hollowed rock. They are in the deepest part of the grotto. Should anyone try to drive me from this spot, which belongs to no

one, I will throw a torch into the powder, and be blown to atoms, with all that we possess."

Timar covered his face with his hands, and was silent.

"One thing more," whispered Theresa, coming closer to Timar, "I believe that the fellow has some other reason for coming here besides having spent all his money, and wishing to extort more from us. This visit has some reference to you or that other gentleman. Be on your guard, if there is any reason for secrecy."

The moon sank behind the poplars, and the sky began to brighten in the east. The goldfinches twittered in the thickets. It was the dawn of day.

Near the island of Morava, a long-drawn note was sounded from the signal horn. The sailors awoke. Steps were heard approaching. A boatman came to say that the vessel was ready to start. The wind had gone down, and they could proceed. The guests, Euthyn Trikaliss and his pale daughter Timea, appeared. Naomi was soon ready with a hastily prepared breakfast of goats' milk, honey, and coffee made of roasted corn.

Timea drank no milk, but gave her portion to Narcissa, who took it eagerly, to the great displeasure of Naomi.

Euthyn Trikaliss asked Timar where the other man had gone; and when he was told that he had left in the night, Trikaliss turned pale. He bade good-bye to Theresa. Timea seemed listless. She complained that she did not feel well. Timar was the last to leave, and on his departure he gave Theresa a silk handkerchief for Naomi, for which her mother thanked him, and promised that the girl would wear it.

"I shall come back again," said Timar, pressing Theresa's hand. Then he went to the boat, accompanied by his hostess and Almirus.

Naomi climbed to the top of the rock, and sat down on the soft moss in the midst of the thick-leaved sedum. She looked longingly with dreamy eyes after the skiff. Narcissa crept up to her, got into her lap, and laid her head on the girl's breast.

"You faithless creature! So you can love me *now*! But you ran after that other girl, and now that she has gone you return to *me*! I am good enough for you when *she* is not here! Go! I don't love you."

And she pressed the foolish little kitten to her heart, and

stroked her soft head and drew her close to her own smooth chin, while, with eyes full of tears, she looked all the time at the receding boat.

CHAPTER X.

ALI TSCHORBADSCHL

On the following morning, the weather being propitious, the Santa Barbara continued her passage up the river. Nothing of importance happened till night. Everybody prepared early for bed—the unanimous decision being that little rest had been enjoyed on shore during the night previous. But again for Timar there was to be no repose.

While the boat lay calmly at anchor, only the monotonous splashing of the waves broke the silence. Everything was so quiet that Timar could hear what his next neighbour was doing in the adjoining cabin, which was divided from his own by a thin partition. What he heard was the drawing of a cork from a bottle, the stirring of something in a glass with a spoon, and the counting of money. After a brief interval of quiet, he heard—exactly as he had heard the night before—a weary sigh, followed by the distressful cry, “Oh, Allah!”

Finally he heard a dull thud—a kind of hesitant knock on the partition wall.

“Please come here,” said the voice of Euthyn Trikaliss, imploringly.

Timar quickly dressed himself, and hurried to his neighbour.

The room which Timar now entered contained two berths, separated by a table. One of the berths had a curtain across it, concealing the occupant. In the other lay Trikaliss. On the table stood a large casket and two vials.

“You ordered something, Sir?” enquired Timar.

“I do not order, I entreat.”

“Is anything the matter?”

“Soon there will be nothing more the matter with me: I have taken poison. Do not make any disturbance. Sit by me and listen to the end. Timea cannot waken. I have

given her an extract of poppy, for I want her to be in a deep sleep at this hour. Do not interrupt me. What you would tell me . . . has been useless for more than an hour. The time is short—this is a poison that works promptly. Do not trouble yourself. I do not regret my act. Had I regretted it, I had in my hand an antidote. I repeat—I do not regret. So heed my words—the time is short.

“My name is not Euthyn Trikaliss, but Ali Tschorbadshi, formerly Governor of Candia, lately Khazniar of Stamboul. Do you know what is going on in Turkey now? The Sultan is instituting reforms; and the Ulema and the various political factions hold human life now-a-days very cheap. One party kills those who do not identify themselves with it, while the opposition burns down the homes of those in power. No one is so distinguished that he is safe from the ruler or his minions.

“Pasha Pertew invited the Governor of Edrene, Pasha Emir, to dinner. When the coffee was passed round, a cup of poison was handed to the guest. He recognised it, and only asked if he might mix the draught with the coffee, which makes it more deadly. He then blessed the Sultan, washed himself, prayed, and died. In these days every Turkish magnate carries poison in his seal-ring, to be ready when his turn comes. I had timely intimation that the royal eye was fixed on me. I was no conspirator, but there were two good reasons why my death was desirable; one was my money—the other, my daughter. The exchequer needs my money—the seraglio, my daughter. It is not hard to die. For that I am prepared. But I am not willing to sacrifice my daughter to the harem, nor to leave her a beggar. I decided to outwit my enemies, and flee with my money and child. I had my face shaved, to make it resemble a Greek merchant's. I reached Galatz by secret, round-about ways. I could go no further by land. When you told me that the owner of your craft was Athanas Brasowitsch, I was delighted, for he is related to me. Timea's mother was a Greek, and was descended from his family. So I hired your ship, and converted my money into corn. It was safest thus. Allah is good and wise. He decrees that no man shall escape his own destiny. I had often done Brasowitsch good service; now it was my time to ask for a favour in return. You guessed that I was a fugitive, but

whether as a criminal or political runaway was not clear to you. In spite of your doubt, and conformably with your duty as the ship's supercargo, you assisted my flight with all possible speed. In a wonderful manner we overcame the dangers of the Iron Gate—skilfully outran the brigantine—and playfully escaped quarantine. Having eluded all this array of great and imminent perils, I now fall into my grave, stumbling over a wisp of straw!

“That man whom we met on the undiscovered island is a spy for the Turkish Government. *I* knew *him*, and I am sure that *he* recognized *me*. They are awaiting us at Pancsova. Do not interrupt me—I know what you would say: that this is Hungarian soil, and that neither border-land delivers up political fugitives. But they will pursue me as a thief. They have no right—for I only took my own property; and if the Government has any claim against me, I have left twenty-seven houses as indemnity. But in spite of all this, they will accuse me of robbing the public treasury; and Austria has always readily yielded up criminal runaways, especially when spies are on their track. That fellow recognised me; and that is my destruction.”

Great beads of sweat now stood on the speaker's sallow forehead; and his face was like wax.

“Give me a drink of water—I have so much to say yet. I cannot save myself, but I can save my daughter and her fortune. Allah's will be done! Who can escape his own shadow? Now promise me, on your faith and honour, that you will carry out all I plan for you.

“In the first place, as soon as I am dead, bury me somewhere in the river. A Mussulman cannot desire Christian burial. But do it after the manner of sailors. Sewed in a canvas, with a heavy stone tied to my hands and my feet, let me be sunk where the Danube is deepest. Thus would I be buried. My son, do as I tell you. Steer the ship carefully to Komorn. Take all care of Timea. Here in this casket is all my ready money, not more than a thousand ducats. The rest of my wealth lies in the sacks in the form of produce. I have left on the table a letter. Put it by. It explains that I have fallen mortally ill from eating melons, and that my property consists only of one thousand ducats. I have written thus that no one can accuse you of having part or lot in my death, or can hold you responsible for my

money. I shall present you with nothing. You will act altogether from the goodness of your heart, freely and cheerfully. Allah will give you your reward. You could not give credit to a better debtor. Conduct Timea to Athanas Brasowitsch, and ask him to receive her as a daughter. He has one daughter—may she prove a sister to my child! Deliver to Brasowitsch the money. He is to invest it to Timea's best advantage. Deliver to him also the cargo, and request him to be present when it is unloaded, for I have bought the first quality of grain, that it may not be exchanged. Do you understand?"

The dying man peered into Timar's eyes, and struggled with himself to speak further.

"Then" and he was silent again.

"Have I said it? I wanted to say something more, but my brain is turned. How red this midnight is! How red the moon is! Yes, yes; the red half-moon."

"At this moment a slight movement in Timea's bed drew her father's attention, and turned his thoughts in a new channel. Frightened, he half arose in bed, and sought with a trembling hand for something under his pillow. His eyes started out of their sockets.

"Oh! I had almost forgotten it! Timea! I gave Timea a sleeping-draught. If you do not waken her at the right time, she will sleep into eternity. Here in this bottle is the antidote. As soon as I am gone, rub her temples with it—also the region about the heart, until she awakens. Why, I had almost taken her with me, and I have no wish to do that. On your faith and honour, promise me that you will restore her—that you will not let her sleep herself to death."

"The dying man pressed Timar's hand convulsively to his breast. The death-struggle was already visible in his distorted face.

"Of what was I speaking just now? What did I want to say? What was on my mind? Oh, yes, 'The red half-moon!'"

Through the open window the moon was shining—red from the clouds out of which it was rising. Was the dying man in his delirium speaking of it, or did the radiant light remind him of something else?

"Yes, the red half-moon," he whispered once more. Then as he drew Timar towards him for a farewell embrace, the death-spasm locked his lips for ever.

CHAPTER XL

THE LIVING STATUE.

Timar was alone with a corpse—with a living person in a death-like sleep—and with a buried secret. The silent midnight brooded over all. But the midnight shades whispered:—

“See! If you do not perform what you have promised—if you do not throw the dead man into the Danube—if you do not waken the sleeper, but let her pass into the other world of deeper slumber—what then? The informer has perhaps already denounced the fugitive Tschorbadschi in Pancsova. Suppose you forestall the informer by landing in Belgrade instead of Pancsova, and make the declaration yourself. According to law a third of the treasure of the criminal will be given to you. You have no longer a master. The father is dead, and it depends upon you whether to waken the daughter or let her sleep the everlasting sleep. What a rich man you will become instantly! And a rich man is a man to be looked up to, while a poor man is only somebody’s clerk!”

Timar replied to the shades thus:—

“Then let me be only that poor clerk!”

And in order to silence these intrusive tempters, he closed the cabin window. A kind of fear seized him when he looked at the red moon. It seemed to him that these evil suggestions came from this orb, and that this explained the last words of the dead man—“the red moon.”

He drew the curtain from Timea’s berth. The maiden lay like a living statue. Her breast rose and fell softly, her lips were half open, her eyes shut, and on her countenance

was the supernatural calm of death. One of her hands was raised above her dishevelled hair, and the other held the folds of her night-dress closely pressed to her bosom.

Timar gazed at her tremblingly, as if he beheld an enchanted fairy, from whom poor mortals received life-destroying heartache. He began to rub the temples of the sleeper with the volatile salts in the bottle. And while he watched the girl's countenance, he thought to himself:—

“Could I let you die, you glorious creature? Were the ship full of pearls, and were they all to be mine at your death, I would not permit you to die. There are no diamonds, even the largest in the world, whose lustre I would so delight to see as the sparkle of your eyes, should you open them upon me.”

But the sleeper's face did not change during the friction upon her brow and temples. Her arched and full eyebrows did not tremble as the hand of a strange man touched them.

The directions had ordered him to rub the pit of her stomach with the antidote. Timar was therefore obliged to take the girl's hand and draw it away from her breast. The passive hand made not the slightest resistance. It was stiff and cold; so too was her whole body—beautiful and rigid as alabaster.

The midnight shades whispered again:—

“Look you, how beautiful she is! No lips that ever were pressed were lovelier than these. Who would know, if you kissed her?”

Yet Timar replied to the gathering shadows:—

“No! I have never stolen anything in my life; and this would be a theft.”

And with that he drew up the Persian bed-covering, which the girl had thrown off in her sleep, and veiled her whole figure up to her shoulders with it, rubbing the fluid on her stomach under the quilt; and in order to guard against temptation, he looked steadily at the maiden's face. It was as if he gazed upon an altar-piece, from which coldness fell upon him.

At last suddenly her dark lashes stirred, and her dusky eyes opened, and stared without expression. Her breath quickened, and Timar felt her heart beat under his hand.

He drew his hand away instantly. Then he held the

strong fluid where the girl could smell it. Timea was awake, for she pushed the bottle away and frowned.

Timar called her gently by name. At the sound she sprang up, whispering "Father." She remained sitting on the edge of her bed. There she stared in unconsciousness. The bed-covering slid from her lap; her night-dress slipped from her shoulder; she was like an antique marble statue.

"Timea," said Timar; and he drew the clothing again about her person. The maiden was not conscious. "Timea, your father is dead!" And the girl started involuntarily at the sound, so that her breast was again uncovered; but she felt and knew nothing.

Timar ran swiftly to his own cabin, and brought out a coffee-pot. In feverish haste he prepared strong, black coffee, in the Turkish fashion, and when it was ready, he went to Timea, held her in one arm, and forcing open her mouth with the other hand, poured the liquid down her throat.

Until now he had had only the rigidity of unconsciousness to contend with, but when the girl had swallowed the warm and bitter draught, she pushed Timar so violently from her that the cup fell out of his hand; and then Timea threw herself on the bed, and drew the coverings over her, while her teeth began to chatter.

"God be praised! She will live, for the fever has shaken her," sighed Timar half aloud. "And now I must attend to her father's burial."

CHAPTER XII.

A SAILOR'S BURIAL.

Naturally this service is easily performed at sea. The man dies, is sewed up in a canvas bag, a cannon ball is tied to his feet, and he is quietly dropped into the unsounded deep. His grave will be overgrown with coral. But to throw from a river boat a dead body into the Danube, gives rise to questions of propriety and decency. For there are near shores lined with villages and towns, having churches whose bells may toll the funeral requiem, and whose priests may accompany the remains to consecrated ground.

Timar understood very well that in spite of all this the burial must be done in true sailor fashion. The situation did not embarrass him. Before the ship weighed anchor, he informed the pilot that there was a dead body on board—that Trikaliss had died the night before.

"I knew well enough that some evil would befall us," replied Johann Fabula, "from the way the sturgeons followed us. It is a sign of death."

"Let us," said Timar, "land here at the next village, and ask the priest to perform the funeral service. We must not take the corpse with us—for, at best, we are in questionable repute at quarantine."

Fabula coughed, and said, "We can at least try it."

The village in view was Plezkovacza—a rich parish, having a church with two spires and a deanery.

The dean was a distinguished looking man, of a dignified form, long flowing beard, thick eyebrows, and pleasing voice.

He knew Timar, for the latter had been to him often to buy corn—the dean being accustomed to make transfers for his parish.

"My son, you come at an unlucky hour," called out the dean to him, as he spied him in the court. "It has been a poor harvest, and what grain there was has been sold long ago."

"This time," replied Timar, "I bring you seed to be planted in sacred ground. A dead man is on board, awaiting his burial. I beg your reverence to perform the usual rites."

"But, my son, we must not be in a hurry," broke in the dean. "Has the Christian confessed? Did he partake of the last Sacrament? Are you sure that he was not a member of the Greek Church? In such a case I may not bury him."

"We have no father-confessor on our ship," replied Timar. "This worthy man died without any consolation, in his own humanity, as we sailors have to do. But if your reverence is not willing to bury him with full rites, will you not kindly furnish the refusal in writing, that I may explain fully to the man's relations why I have not shown him the last honours. We will bury him then ourselves somewhere along the bank."

The dean gave him the letter of refusal. The peasants of the place fell into a violent passion.

"That would be a pretty mess! To bring an unblessed

body here within our boundaries! Just as sure as the ten commandments the hail would destroy all the neighbouring fields. No village wants a corpse as a gift, especially now that the farmer's last hope is in the approaching vintage. Next year the body would be a vampire—sucking up all the rain and dew."

They threatened to attack Timar, and only desisted on condition that the four strongest of their number should go on board, and watch the body during one day's voyage till they should be beyond their own boundary. He could do with his dead then what he chose.

Timar affected great indignation, but allowed the four to accompany him. The sailors had meanwhile constructed a coffin, and laid in it all that was left of Trikaliss. The coffin-lid waited only to be screwed down.

Timar's first duty was to look after Timea. Her fever was at its height. Her face was parched and hot, though still pale. She had again lost all consciousness. She knew nothing of the funeral preparations.

"It is better so," said Timar to himself, and took with him the paint-pot. He stepped up to the coffin-lid, and wrote in neat, plain capitals, EUTHYN TRIKALISS, and the date of his death. The four Servians watched the operation with interest.

"You put on a letter too," urged Timar on one of them, and pressed the brush into his hand. The villager, anxious to display his accomplishments, daubed a great X on the board.

"You are a fine fellow; how well you have done it! Won't you try?" asking the second, who, emulating the first, left his mark.

"What is your name?"

"Johso Berkitsch."

"And yours?"

"Mirko Jakowitsch."

"May you live long! Let us drink each other's health in a glass of plum brandy." They consented without hesitation.

"I am called Mihály, and my other name is Timar. A good name. I can have it as I choose—Hungarian, Turkish, or Greek. But you'd better call me Mihály."

He hastened away again to look after Timea. She was

still insensible, and her fever raged. Timar did not despair, for he felt that whoever sailed the Danube had always near him an entire pharmacy, since cold water cures everything. His whole treatment consisted in placing cold compresses at the patient's feet and on her forehead, changing these as soon as the temperature required it.

The Saint Barbara glided on up the river. The Servian fellows had struck up a sudden friendship with the crew, assisting in all their labours, and receiving in return the best meats the ship's larder afforded.

The dead man lay in the box on deck enveloped in a clean sheet. It was his pall.

Towards evening Timar told the men that he was tired out, and was going to bed; he had not slept for two nights. The ship was to continue her course until dark, and then they could drop anchor.

Instead of going to his own cabin, however, he stole into Timea's room, hid the night lamp in an empty chest (so that the light was not visible outside), and sat by the sick girl all night long. Not a moment did he close his eyes, but incessantly bathed her heated brow and calmed her fevered dreams.

He heard when they cast anchor. He heard the waves sob against the ship's sides. He heard a hammering on a dull, deadened substance. "That is the head of a nail on which they have placed a thick cloth," he thought to himself.

Soon there was a sudden splash, and all was still.

Timar waited till day dawned, and till the vessel was again under full sail. The girl was sleeping quietly; her fever was broken.

"Where is that coffin?" were Timar's first words when he came on deck.

The four Servians stepped defiantly forward.

"We overlaid it with stones and dropped it into the river, so that you could not bury him within our lines, and so that the dead man should cause the living no trouble."

"What have you done, you miscreants? The authorities will call me to account for the missing passenger; they will accuse me of maliciously disposing of him. Now sign an affidavit that you have done it yourselves. Which of you will draw up the paper?"

Not one of them would admit his ability to write.

"Oh, but you, Johso, and you, Mirko, helped me to mark the letters upon the coffin-lid."

It now turned out that each of the two, according to his own testimony, was limited in his chirography to the one letter which he had painted on the board.

"Very well! Then I shall take you to Pantschova, and you can give your evidence orally to the colonel; he will bring you to terms, never fear!"

It was amazing how soon, after this threat, all four learned to write! On reconsideration, they all thought that perhaps they could write well enough to make the declaration.

Timar brought out pens, ink, and paper; then calling one of the more lettered of the crew, he dictated a statement, that at night, when the supercargo was asleep, they, without his knowledge or assistance, through fear of hailstones and a vampire, had thrown the dead body of Euthyn Trikaliss into the Danube.

"Sign your names, and state where each of you lives, so that, if an examination is necessary, officers may find you to verify these statements." And each witness wrote with great exactitude. Mirko proved to be Ixa Karakassowitch, of Gunerovacz. Johso was Hyego Stiriapicza. Both lived at Mednelincz. They then parted from Timar with dignity, though it required an amount of self-control and power of will on Timar's part to keep him from laughing in their faces.

He landed them at a suitable place.

* * * * *

Ali Tschorbadshi rested where he had wished—at the bottom of the Danube.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRAIGHT STORY.

When Timea awoke in the morning, she felt nothing more of her past illness. Her youthful constitution had won the victory. She dressed herself, came out of the cabin, and, meeting Timar at the bow, asked him, "Where is my father?"

"He is dead."

Timea stared at him with her large melancholy eyes; her face could not be paler than it was already.

"And where have you buried him?"

"He lies at the bottom of the Danube."

Timea sat down by the bulwarks, and gazed into the water. She did not speak; she did not weep; she only sat and stared.

Timar thought it would be well to try and comfort her.

"While you were ill and lying unconscious," he said, "God suddenly and unexpectedly called your father to Himself. I was with him in his last hour. He spoke of you to me. He sent his last blessing to you through me. At his request I am to take you to an old friend of your father's—related to you on the maternal side. He will adopt you as his daughter, and be a father to you. He has a beautiful young daughter, a little older than you, who will be a sister to you. There all will be well with you. Whatever is on this ship is all your property, which your father leaves to you. You will be rich, and will always remember your father with gratitude for what he has done for you."

Timar's voice was choked; he thought—

"Yes; he died that you might be free. He chose death that you might have life!"

Then Timar looked at the girl in surprise. She had not moved during his speech. She did not shed a tear. Timar thought—"Perhaps she is ashamed to weep before a stranger;" and he stepped aside. But the girl did not weep even when alone. This was strange indeed. When she saw the white kitten in danger of drowning, her tears fell abundantly for the animal; and now when she was told that her father slept at the bottom of the Danube, not one tear-drop fell from her eyes. Was it because she was one of those who weep on slight occasions, and in great trouble can do nothing but grow rigid and silent?

This was possible; but Timar had something else to do beside bothering his head over psychological problems. The towers of Pancsova began to appear in the north-east; and down the stream came a light skiff which held eight armed janissaries and their captain. When they reached the ship, they stuck a boat-hook into her side, and without further invitation climbed on board. The captain approached Timar, who was standing by the cabin door.

"Are you the ship's commander?"

"At your service."

"On this vessel there is a Turkish criminal named Khazniar Pasha, travelling under the false title of Euthyn Trikaliss, with his stolen treasure."

"On this ship there *did* travel a Greek fruit-dealer, Euthyn Trikaliss by name, with no stolen goods, but with a cargo of corn, which was examined at Orsova, as my ship's papers will prove. Here is the first one; read it at your leisure. I know nothing of a Turkish Pasha."

"Where is this traveller?"

"If he was a Greek, he is in Abraham's bosom; if he was a Turk, he is with Mahomet."

"He cannot be dead!"

"He is indeed. Here is his last will and testament. He died of dysentery."

The captain read the document, casting a side glance now and then at Timea, who stood on the same spot where her father's death had been made known to her. She did not understand what they were talking about, for they spoke in a tongue foreign to her.

"My mate and six sailors are witnesses to the fact that the man is dead."

"That is bad for *him*, not for *us*. If he is dead, he is buried, and you can tell us where he lies. We will have him dug up, and here is a man who can identify him if he is Ali Tschorbadshi. That will be sufficient to enable us to lay an embargo on the cargo. Where is he buried?"

"At the bottom of the Danube."

"That is strange. Why was this done?"

"Here is the third document, which proves that the Greek Dean at Pleskovacz, in whose district Trikaliss died, not only refused him honourable burial, but forbade our bringing his corpse on shore. The people said, we must fling him into the water."

The captain rattled his sword angrily.

"Thunder and blazes! Cursed priests! They are always making mischief! But you must know in what part of the river you threw the corpse."

"You must know, captain, that the Pleskovaczer people sent four watchmen on board the ship to see that I did not bury the body on dry land; and when we were all

asleep, without the knowledge of any one on board ship, they loaded the coffin with stones and threw it into the Danube. Here is the sworn statement of the men themselves. Take the document, find the wrong-doers, and punish them as they deserve."

The captain stamped his foot with rage, and broke into an angry laugh, as after reading the paper he flung it back to Timar, saying—

"A damned pretty story. First the fugitive dies. So we can't get hold of him; then the priest refuses him burial; then the peasants smuggle him into the water; and then you give me a document signed by two names that nobody ever heard of, and with residences that nobody can ever find. And now it's all one, whether I shall try to find the corpse by dragging the whole river, or try to hunt up the two rascals who flung it overboard. And without identifying the body, I cannot lay an embargo on the vessel and cargo. You have managed this pretty well, Sir! A good legal paper, in every point! One, two, three, four! Perhaps you have the baptismal certificate of this young girl also. Whatever one asks for, you can furnish, it seems!"

"Certainly, captain, if you desire it!"

Timar had no such document. But he put on such a sheepish and innocent look, that the captain shook his head and then slapped Timar on the back—

"You are a clever rogue, Sir! You have saved this girl's inheritance; for without seeing her father, I can neither arrest him nor confiscate his property. Go on your journey! You are a good manager!"

Then he turned round, and to the last of the janissaries, who was not quick enough to get out of his way, he gave such a blow on the ear that the victim nearly fell into the water. The captain of the janissaries then ordered his men to embark. As he got into his boat, he looked back with great interest. Timar gazed after him with the same stupid, sheepish look. The cargo of the Saint Barbara was saved!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SAINT BARBARA'S FATE

The staunch merchant-vessel continued her journey without further hindrance, and Timar had no other care than to settle the daily bickerings of the canal-hands. The course of the Danube in the plains of the Hungarian lowlands becomes thoroughly tiresome. No more rocks, no more waterfalls nor historic ruins to please the fancy; only monotonous meadows, and an uninterrupted line of aspens to fringe the banks. There was very little of interest with which to entertain Timea, could Timar engage her in conversation.

The girl frequently, however, did not leave the cabin during the live-long day. There she sat in her solitude, and often the food taken to her was returned untasted. The evenings were growing longer; it was towards the close of October; and the rainy season suddenly changed the aspect of the former beautiful sky.

Timea locked herself in her private asylum; and all that Timar could know of her was the heavy sighs which penetrated the wall between them. He never heard her cry aloud, nor saw her weep. Perhaps her great calamity had for ever frozen her heart. What warmth could ever melt this ice?

Poor friend, why do *you* dwell on that problem? Why do you, waking and sleeping, dream of that snowy face? Were the child not beautiful, she is rich, very rich, and you are only a poor wight. What right has a miserable wretch like you to occupy his thoughts with the image of so high-born a lady! If only the case were reversed, and *you* were rich as she, and *she* as poor as you!

But how rich can Timea be? This Timar attempted to calculate, in order to drive himself to despair or to dispel his vain nonsense.

Her father had left her, in ready cash, one thousand ducats and the ship's cargo; which latter, at current rates, was worth at least ten thousand more. Perhaps she owned jewels, too. According to the current Austrian values of that day, she was the possessor of not less than one hundred thousand florins. In a small Hungarian town this would be considered great wealth.


A riddle forced itself upon Timar, to which he found no solution. If Ali Tschorbadtschi's hoarded treasure consisted of ten thousand ducats, it would not have made in weight more than sixty-six pounds. This could easily be hidden in the pocket of a mantle, and a good pedestrian could throw the bag over his shoulder and walk off. What need then had Ali to convert this sum into grain, needing a vessel threatened by wind, whirlpool, rocks, and sandbanks throughout a voyage of over a month and a half? With the same treasure in a bag he could have reached Hungary, over hill and dale, in two weeks.

There was no explanation to this riddle. On this hinged still another enigma. If Ali Tschorbadtschi's treasure, whether honestly acquired or not, only footed up to eleven or twelve thousand ducats, what actuated the Turkish Government to send after it a full-manned brigantine, or to despatch couriers and spies to follow up the fugitive? What could be left for the Sultan after all the expenses were paid—even if the booty, in whole or in part, were returned to him? Why was it considered worth while to set in operation so vast and prodigious a machinery for such unimportant spoils? Or was Timea perhaps, after all, the main object? Timar had so great an inclination for the marvellous and the adventurous, that he accepted this interpretation, although his logical reasoning proved to him the impossibility of verifying it.

One evening the wind blew the clouds aside, and, as Timar looked out of his cabin window, he discovered in the western horizon the new moon.

The "red half-moon."

The glowing splendour of the crescent beamed and danced on the surface of the Danube. It seemed to him that the



moon was the profile of a human being, as is often pictured in the almanac; and that the man in the moon, with his distorted mouth, said something to Timar; only one is not yet able to understand the lunar language: it is a strange tongue.

Timar waited, as if he were to receive an answer to his enquiries. To which question? To all. To his heart-throbs, or to his computations? To all. He was not able yet to spell the answers. The "red half-moon" dipped down gradually into the Danube, and the reflected rays disported themselves far beyond him on the ship's shining beak, mocking him with, "Don't you understand me yet?"

The last glimmering beams bade him farewell with, "Tomorrow I come again; you will understand me then."

The pilot was of the opinion that they should utilise the fine, clear weather after sundown, and sail till dark. They were very near Komorn. This quarter was so familiar to him that he could have confidently steered his vessel blindfolded. From this point no serious hindrances lay in his way.

And yet!

Just below Fuzitö a weak crackling resounded under the water. But weak as it was it caused the steersman to shout to the drag-men on the shore, "Stand still!"

Timar also turned pale, and stood for a moment benumbed. Fright showed itself in his face, for the first time during the whole voyage.

"We have run into a tree-trunk," he called to the pilot.

That great strong fellow, Fabula, losing his wits, left the helm, and crying like a child, ran the length of the deck towards his berth.

"Run into a snag?"

It was indeed true. When the Danube overflows, it breaks its banks, and carries the uprooted trees along the river-bed to be caught and fastened in the bottom by entangling stems and roots. Every upward-bound vessel driving on one of these knotty obstacles, immediately springs a leak. The pilot may guard his ship against rocks and sandbanks, but neither knowledge, nor experience, nor skill can preserve him from the treacherous trees lying in ambush under water. Many a ship has foundered on these malicious snags.

"That's the end of us!" cried both pilot and crew. Each

and every one left his post, and hastened to secure his few effects.

The ship swung round against the stream, and the bow began to sink. It was sheer impossibility to think of saving the vessel. She was filled with sacks. To find the leak, these would all have to be removed. Before this could be done, the whole would be sunk.

Timar burst open the door of Timea's room.

"Miss Timea, gather your clothes together quickly, and take that casket on the table; our ship is sinking, and we must flee."

He helped the frightened girl on with her warm wrap, showed her how she could step down into the small boat, and assured her that the pilot would give her all possible aid.

Then he ran to his own room, to secure the chest containing the ship's papers, and the money-chest.

But Johann Fabula was no helper to poor Timea. On the contrary, the sight of her only angered him.

"I have said all along that this white-cheeked witch, with her black, meeting eyebrows, would be our destruction. We ought to have pitched her into the water the first thing."

Timea did not understand a single word he said, but his tone and his bleared eyes so scared her that she ran back into the cabin, and threw herself on the bed, where soon she saw the water gradually creeping up to the very edge of the bed. Her only thought was that the water would carry her down stream to the spot where her dear father was at rest, and where he and she would be united soon again.

Timar himself groped knee-deep in the water before he had collected all the necessary things into the chest, and had put it on his shoulder to hasten to the small boat.

"But where is Timea?" he cried, when he saw she was not in the boat.

"How the deuce do I know?" shrieked Fabula.

Timar darted to Timea's cabin, and, wading to his waist, caught up the girl in his arms.

"Have you the casket with you?"

"Yes," she faltered, trembling all over.

He asked no more questions, but hastened to the deck, from thence to the boat, and gently placed the girl on the middle seat.

The fate of the Saint Barbara was sealed frightfully soon.

The boat was already under water, and, a few minutes later, only the after-deck and the mizzen mast-head were to be seen above the surface.

"Shove off!" cried Timar to the oarsmen; and the skiff neared the shore.

"Where have you the casket?" he asked of the girl, when they were well under way.

"Here;" and Timea showed him a confectioner's box, containing Turkish candied fruit.

"Unlucky girl! that is a candy-box, not the casket!"

She had indeed saved her box of comfits, bought as a present to the new sister, and left behind the valuable casket and its contents. That remained in the already sunken cabin.

"Back to the ship!"

"Nobody is crazy enough to go back under water to find a box!" grumbled Fabula.

"Turn about!" thundered Timar; "I order it!"

The boat turned back to the sunken vessel. Timar himself sprang on the poop, and stepped down the submerged stairs.

Timea, with her great black eyes, followed him till he disappeared from sight.

She seemed to say, "And you, too, are going before me into the flood!"

Timar approached the cabin; but, as the ship was half on her beam-ends, he was obliged to exercise extreme care not to slide off the slippery planks. Arriving at the door, luckily for him, he found it open. Within was pitch darkness. The flood had risen almost to the ceiling. He groped to the table. The box was not there. Could the girl have left it on the bed? The bed, by the upward pressure of the water, was lifted to the top of the room. Timar forced it down. The casket was not there. Perhaps, from the inclination of the vessel, it had slipped to the floor. His hands could find it nowhere. But at last he struck with his foot what his hands had sought for in vain. The precious box had dropped down. He seized it, and, after a desperate struggle, came forth with it, and climbed to the upper side of the over-heeled ship.

The minutes that Timar spent under water were an eternity to Timea. She, too, held her breath, to see how long one could sustain life without breathing. When Timar's head rose above water, she drew a long sigh of relief. And a

smile overspread her face as Timar handed her the recovered box.

"Not for the sake of the box, Herr Timar," cried the pilot, as he helped the supercargo into the boat, "but for the sake of these eyebrows, you have already risked a watery grave three times! Three times!"

Timea asked Timar softly what "three times" was in Greek.

Timar told her the Greek word for the number.

Timea watched him a long while, and then repeated, in a gentle and low tone, as if learning the word, "three times."

The men bent their oars in the direction of Almasch. The glow of evening mirrored itself in the pure steel colour of the surface of the river. Only one long dark track was visible. It was a "memento mori"—the skeleton of the Saint Barbara.

BOOK II

TIME A.

CHAPTER I

THE FOSTER-FATHER.

It was about six o'clock in the evening when the sailors left the sunken Saint Barbara, and at half-past seven Timar reached Komorn with Timea.

The driver of the Postal Express coach knew the house of Brasowitsch well, and he drove rapidly, for he had received a good "pcur boire."

Timar lifted the girl from the carriage as they reached the house, and told her she was now at home. Then he took the box of treasure under his arm, and led Timea up the stairway.

The house of Athanas Brasowitsch had an upper story, an unusual thing in Komorn, for the memory of the destructive earthquake which occurred there in the last century had led to the building of one-storied dwellings.

On the lower floor of this house was a large restaurant, the rendezvous of all the town. The upper part of the building was occupied by the family of the merchant. Athanas Brasowitsch was not usually at home at this hour, as Timar knew; but Timar took Timea up at once to the drawing-room. In this apartment there was a good deal of style as to furniture; and a servant was in the ante-room whom Timar ordered to tell his master that there were visitors waiting to see him. Timar requested him also to announce the guests to the lady of the house. This proved unnecessary, for as soon as the outside door was heard to open, the mistress of the mansion stuck her head through the doorway to see who was coming.

Mrs. Sophie had not got over her habits as a chambermaid! Pardon me! This slipped from my pen before I was

aware. But the truth is that Brasowitsch had raised her from a lowly station. It was a love-match, and such a thing can be forgiven by everybody. It is therefore not because of people's tongues, but because of certain characteristics, that I say Mrs. Sophie could not get away from her old habits. All her clothes looked as if they had been given her by the ladies she served. Curiosity and gossip were marked features in her nature. And in her talk she used foreign words so ignorantly, and so absurdly misplaced, that her listeners almost died of laughing: besides, she could not speak low—her tone was a sort of shriek, as if some one were sticking a knife into her, and she was calling out for help.

"Ah, it is you, Timar!" screamed the lady, as she thrust her head further out at the door; "and who is the pretty girl you have with you? What is in the box under your arm? Come in! Athalie, see whom Timar has brought with him!" Timar led Timea forward, saluting all present with a good evening. Timea looked about timidly.

Besides the mistress of the house, there were a young lady and gentleman in the room. The girl was of remarkable beauty—beauty of a proud and tropical type. Her slender figure hinted at a corset. High heels, and hair dressed high also, added to her stature. She wore yellow mitts, and her finger-nails were long and sharp. Her features were regular, her lips red and pouting; and she had a rosy complexion, small white teeth, dimples in her cheeks, a well-formed nose, sparkling eyes, and black eyebrows; in fact she was quite striking in person, and she knew how to hold her pretty figure proudly, with her head high, and her chest well forward. Such was Miss Athalie Brasowitsch.

The gentleman opposite her was a young officer, about thirty years old, with a clear open countenance and black eyes. According to the Austrian military regulations, he was smooth-shaven, with the exception of a small crescent-shaped goatee.

This soldier wore a blue frock coat with rose-coloured velvet facings. It was the uniform of the Royal Engineer corps.

Timar knew him at once as Mr. Katschuka, lieutenant in charge of the fortifications, and also of the Commissary Department—two rather unusual functions, but filled in this instance by one man.

The lieutenant was now occupied in taking the portrait of Miss Athalie in pastel. He had already painted her picture by day-light, and he was now doing it by lamp-light.

The entrance of Timea disturbed the artistic employment. The face and figure of this graceful young girl had the effect of an apparition. As she came out of the darkness, she seemed some fairy-like ethereal creature—a vision seen in a dream. When Mr. Katschuka saw her, as he looked up from his drawing-board, he trailed his pencil with such a stroke over the forehead in his picture, that it took no end of white bread to rub it off again; and involuntarily he rose from his chair as the maiden entered. Every one in the room rose also, even Athalie.

But who is the new-comer?

Timar whispered something in Greek to Timea, and she at once approached Madame Sophie, and kissed her hand: upon which Madame Sophie kissed her cheek in return. Then, at a few words from Timar, the girl went up to Athalie modestly, and looked at her shyly. Should she kiss her new sister? should she fling her arms round her neck? Athalie raised her proud head still higher: then Timea bent over her gloved hand and kissed it. Athalie permitted it, looking now at Timea, now at the officer, with blazing eyes and lips pressed closely together. Katschuka seemed quite lost in astonishment over Timea's appearance.

But Timea remained unchanged; her colour did not rise; she was as white as a ghost.

Timar was a good deal embarrassed. How should he introduce his companion, and explain before this officer how she happened to be under his charge?

But Brasowitsch unexpectedly helped him out of his trouble. He entered the room, and with a loud voice said that, a few minutes before, he had read in the "Augsburger Times," to the amazement of his guests in the coffee-room below, the news that the Turkish Pasha, Ali Tschorbadtschi, had run away and taken passage with his daughter on the Saint Barbara, hoping to escape his Turkish pursuers by reaching Hungary.

Now the Saint Barbara was his, Brasowitsch's, ship; and Ali Tschorbadtschi was his old friend and relative on the maternal side! What strange things happened in this world! You may imagine the ship-owner's surprise when the servant had

told him that Timar, with a young girl and a money-box, had just arrived.

"Is it true?" he had asked; and rushed upstairs, upsetting two card-players in his haste.

Brasowitsch was a stout, well-fed man, whose paunch was about a foot before him. His face was red in places where it should have been white, and where it should have been red it was blue. His closely-shaven chin was stubby towards night; and his bristling moustache was besmirched with snuff and tobacco, and saturated in spots with various sorts of spirits. His thick eyebrows made a hedge above his bloodshot eyes. It was a horrible thought that Athalie's eyes might grow to look like his!

When one heard Brasowitsch speak, one could understand why Mrs. Sophie shrieked so dreadfully. Her husband spoke as if he were growling; his tones were deep, like those of a hippopotamus. Mrs. Sophie had to shriek in order to be heard—and it seemed as if the pair had made a wager to see which should bring the other soonest to consumption or apoplexy, in their struggle to be heard. The issue was still doubtful. But Brasowitsch kept cotton in his ears constantly, and Mrs. Sophie wore a bandage round her throat.

Brasowitsch hastened panting up to the room, growling out—

"Is Timar here with the young lady? Where are they?"

Timar advanced, to intercept him at the door; but the big man's paunch was not to be checked easily when once set in motion.

Timar tipped him a wink, as much as to say, "Other people are present."

"O, that's nothing!" replied the master of the house. "We are all one family. The lieutenant belongs to us. Ha, ha! Athalie, everybody knows it! Speak out, Timar! It's in the papers already!"

"What is in the papers?" asked Athalie.

"We are in—that is, our good friend, Ali Tschorbadschi, is in—our relation, who is on board our ship the Saint Barbara, escaping to Hungary with his daughter and his treasure. This is his daughter, isn't it? The pretty creature!"

With these words Brasowitsch embraced Timea quickly, bestowing two loud, moist, and unpleasant kisses upon her, which surprised her greatly.

"You are a smart fellow, Timar, to get her here without trouble. Has any one given you a glass of wine? Sophie, fetch a glass at once!"

Madame Sophie did not obey this order, and Brasowitsch drew Timea between his knees, and stroked her hair with his fat hands.

"And now, Timar, where is my friend Ali?"

"He died on the way," replied Timar, with a constrained voice.

"Ah, that is unlucky!" replied Brasowitsch, trying to make a long face. He drew back his hand from Timea's head.

"Has anything bad happened to him?"

Timar understood his meaning.

"He left all his property and his daughter to your care. You are to be the adopted father of his child, and the guardian of her inheritance."

At these words Brasowitsch became sentimental again. He took Timea's head between his hands, and pressed it to his heart.

"She shall be to me like my own child—my own dear daughter!"

And, zupp! zupp! two more kisses fell on the innocent brow of the victim.

"What is in that box?"

"Money, which I was to give to you."

"Ah, Timar, that is good! How much is there?"

"A thousand ducats!"

"What!" growled Brasowitsch, pushing Timea from his knees. "Only a thousand ducats! Timar, you have stolen the rest!"

"Here is the dead man's statement, written by his own hand. He says that he gave me only 1,000 ducats in cash, the rest of his property being in the cargo in the form of 10,000 bushels of grain."

"That is something like! 10,000 bushels of grain, at 10 gulden and 30 kreuzers, make 125,000 gulden in paper. Come here, my little daughter! Sit on my knee; you are tired, aren't you? Did my good friend leave any other directions?"

"He bade me say to you that he wished you to oversee the discharge of the cargo personally—so that no one could cheat about the grain, which is of the best quality."

"O, I will attend to it myself. I'll be there in person Where is the ship with the grain?"

"Below Almasch, at the bottom of the Danube!"

"What's that? What do you say, Timar?"

"The ship ran against a snag, and sank."

Brasowitsch pushed Timea away from him, and sprang up in a rage.

"My fine ship sunk, with 10,000 bushels of grain! O, you jail-bird! You rascal! You must have been drunk, all of you! I'll punish you for this! I'll have the pilot in irons! I'll have all your wages—and as for you, you shall pay the 10,000 gulden's loss yourself!"

Timar replied quietly, "The ship was worth 6,000 gulden, and is fully insured in the insurance company at Komorn. You have lost nothing."

"But there are other damages, and your bonds of 10,000 gulden will be forfeited."

"We will talk about that by-and-by," replied Timar "We have time enough for that. But what is first to be considered now is the ship's cargo, for the longer it remains under water the more it will be injured."

"What do I care what becomes of it?"

"Then you will not oversee the discharge of it? I thought you were to be present personally to attend to it!"

"Go to the devil! Satan may have it! What can I do with 10,000 bushels of wet grain? I can't undertake to make paste and starch out of it, or to knead it up for cattle-food. The devil take it all!"

"He might not know what to do with it; but the cargo must be disposed of, at all events. The millers in the neighbourhood, the merchants, the stock-raisers, and the peasants may give some sort of a price for it; and, any how, the ship must be unloaded. Some little money can be got for the cargo."

"Money!" This word *did* pass through the cotton into Brasowitch's ears. "Very well. I will give you a power of attorney to-morrow, so that you may dispose of the cargo in a lump."

"It must be done at once. Another day will ruin the grain utterly."

"By the soul of my father, I can't write a word more to-night!"

"I have a power of attorney with me; I thought it would

be necessary: all you have to do is to sign it, and I have pen and ink here also."

At these words, Mrs. Sophie cried out—

"Here, in my parlour, I allow no ink. There are rugs on the floor. Go to the office if you want to write. My room is no place for business! I will have no clerks nor accounts here. This is my parlour!"

"But it's my house!"

"But my own private room!"

"I am master here!"

"And I am mistress!"

The quarrel had this advantage for Timar, that Brasowitsch in a rage, and in order to show that he was master, seized pen and ink, and signed the power of attorney.

But when Timar took the paper, such a torrent of reciprocal abuse was poured out between the husband and wife that it was enough to deafen one. Timar stood in the midst of the disturbance, with as unmoved a countenance as he had shown at the Iron Gate, amid the howling winds and roaring waves.

At last he spoke—

"Will you take care of the money belonging to this orphan, or shall I go to the public administrator with it?"

Brasowitsch was startled.

"If," continued Timar, "you will take charge of it, let me go to the office with you, and we will arrange it there. I don't enjoy servants' quarrels!"

At this "palpable hit" both husband and wife were silent. Such people need a piece of brutality to bring them to their senses. Brasowitsch politely took a light, and said to Timar, "Very well; bring the money along!" And Mrs. Sophie, as if nothing had happened, asked the young man if he would not take a glass of wine?

Timea looked shyly on, at a loss to know what all these words and gestures meant, since she understood nothing that was said. Why did this old man first fondle her and then push her away? What was all this excitement between the man and woman? And how was it that with only a word Timar could quietly tame the raging pair? Nothing then could affect *him*—neither whirlpool, rocks, soldiers, nor these strange people! And now this friend, who had been her companion for a month, who had gone down into the deep three

times in her service, who alone could speak to her in her own language, was about to leave her, and she would never hear his voice again !

But she heard it now.

On his way out of the room Timar addressed her—

“Miss Timea, here is something which belongs to you.”

And he gave her the bag full of Turkish sweatmeats and sweet cordial.

Timea took the bag, and ran to Athalie, offering it to her as a gift.

But Athalie cried out—

“Pshaw ! It’s rosewater, and smells like the servants’ pocket-handkerchiefs on Sunday !”

Timea did not understand these words, but she understood the contemptuous refusal, and stood troubled and silent. Then she bethought herself to offer the sweatmeats to Mrs. Sophie.

This lady declined them, for she said sweet things gave her the toothache. And, quite in despair, Timea turned to the lieutenant with her treasures.

He took some of them courteously, and Timea was so pleased that she gave him a smile of gratitude.

Timar stood at the door and looked round as Timea smiled. It occurred to her to offer him some of her bonbons, but when she turned to do so he had gone. The lieutenant now took leave. He was a gentleman, and he bowed to Timea politely, which gratified her extremely.

Brasowitsch now returned to the room, and he began in a Greek jargon to talk with his wife as to what they should do with Timea. The child understood here and there a word, yet got no idea as to what they were saying.

The charming couple discussed her position, and, while Mrs. Sophie thought so portionless a girl should be brought up as a kitchen-maid, her husband objected, because of what the world might say. It was finally decided that Timea should not be put among the regular servants; that she should eat at the table with the family, but should help wait upon them; that she should not be put at the washtub, but should take care of her own and Athalie’s wardrobe. She must do all the sewing that was necessary, but could sit with the family and not with the servants. She should sleep in Athalie’s room, and help her with her toilette. Athalie needed some one

with whom she could speak freely, and so Timea should have Athalie's old clothes to make over for herself.

And Timea was content with her lot.

After the great misfortune which had left her alone in a strange land, she clung naturally to anything which was offered to her. She was unsuspicious and ready to be of service. That is the destiny of Turkish girls.

She was pleased when she was seated near Athalie at supper-time; and no one had to ask her to help wait upon the table, for she rose herself and changed the plates and arranged the cups. This she did cheerfully and skilfully. Above all she was eager to please Athalie, for she had a child's admiration for this beautiful grown-up young lady. She felt sure, too, that anyone who was so lovely as Athalie must be very, very good.

After supper, at which meal Timea ate only bread and fruit, for she was not accustomed to meat diet, they went into the drawing-room, where Athalie began to play the piano. Timea crouched near her on a low stool, and gazed in profound delight at her flying fingers. Athalie showed her the portrait which the lieutenant had painted, and Timea clasped her hands before it in silent ecstasy.

"Did you never see anything like it before?"

"How should she?" Brasowitsch replied. "The Turks are forbidden by their religion to make a likeness of anybody. They were enraged that the Sultan wanted his portrait taken and hung up over the divan. Ali Tschorbadtschi was mixed up with him in this business, and had to run away. What a fool you were, Ali Tschorbadtschi!"

When Timea heard her father's name, she kissed Brasowitsch's hand gratefully. She imagined that he was speaking reverently and tenderly of the dead.

Athalie went to her room, and Timea carried the candle for her. Athalie seated herself before the mirror, and sighed deeply as she sank into an easy chair. Timea would have liked to know why so lovely a face was so sad. She took the comb from Athalie's hair, and loosened the long braids; then she spread out the abundant chestnut-brown locks of her sister, and plaited them anew in three strands. She took the ear-rings from Athalie's ears, and in doing this her face was so close to Athalie's, that the two images were reflected at once in the mirror. One bright, rosy, sparkling; the other

pale and mild; and yet Athalie sprang up angrily, and pushed her chair back from the mirror. The pale face threw hers into the shade.

"Let us go to bed."

Timea picked up Athalie's garments, which had been carelessly thrown down, and arranged them in neat order. Then she knelt before her, to take off her stockings; and Athalie permitted the service. And when Timea had drawn off one fine silk-socking, and held the snow-white perfectly-formed foot in her hands, she stooped down and kissed it. And Athalie permitted this too.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD ADVICE.

Lieutenant Katschuka passed the café, and found Timar there, in the act of sipping a cup of black coffee.

"I am wet and chilled through and through, and have many a step to take yet," said Timar, pressing the officer's hand, who had advanced cordially towards him.

"Then come to my house, and enjoy a glass of punch."

"I do not believe I can spare the time, thank you. I must go first to the insurance office, about raising the cargo. The damage to the corn increases the longer the ship remains under water. From the insurance office I must hasten to the chief justice, to urge his despatching early to-morrow morning a messenger to Almasch, to put the auction sale in operation. Then I need to see the cattle-drovers and livery men, to influence them, if I can, to help bid in the grain. To-night I want to gallop over to Satar, to the starch works, for the manufacturers there can make the most use of the dampened corn; so that the poor child shall at least recover something from the remnant of her possessions. By the way, I have a letter for you, carefully intrusted to me at Orsova."

Lieutenant Katschuka perused the communication, and then said to Timar—

"That is all right, comrade. Go into town, and transact what business you have to do. Still, for all that, you will not be prevented from spending a half hour at my rooms

when you are through. I live here, next to the 'Anglia.' A large double-headed eagle is painted over the entrance. While your horse is feeding, we can drink a glass of punch, and talk over a few serious matters. Come without fail."

Timar promised, and hurried off to attend to his affairs.

Towards midnight, the great gate with the double eagle, next the Komorn promenade, known as the 'Anglia,' opened.

Timar was waited for by Katschuka, whose valet showed the visitor immediately into his master's private room.

"And I thought you would have taken off Miss Athalie long before this, while I was battling the elements," began Timar.

"The Old Harry is in it!" replied the officer. "I cannot make things come to the point. Sometimes she postpones for one pretext, sometimes for another. It looks to me as if neither of us was quite in earnest."

"O, you may be sure that Miss Athalie is!"

"Nothing is certain upon this earth—least of all a woman's heart. I do not believe in long engagements. One is much more likely to drift under such circumstances. Lovers then discover each other's petty failings. If they are first discovered after marriage, why, in the words of the couplet—

'O may the Lord above provide protection
For fools, bound fast, by love's own blind selection.'

Let me advise you, friend, should you ever get entangled in a woman's net, and desire to marry, do not study the matter too assiduously. If you stop to calculate or to reason, you will only end in nothing."

"It strikes me that the matter of calculation need not be a thankless task in this case, where the subject under discussion is a rich girl."

"Riches, my friend, may be looked at absolutely or relatively. Be sure that every woman is able to squander the interest of the dower she brings her husband. Then I am not quite clear with reference to Miss Athalie's prospects. Her father is always investing in undertakings of which he understands nothing. Enormous sums pass through his hands, but he is quite unable at the end of the year to make a satisfactory business-like balance, which shall show whether he has gained or lost in the grand total."

"I believe he is on a good foundation; and Athalie is a beautiful, cultivated woman."

"Well, well; but what prompts you to sing Athalie's praises to me all at once, as if she were a marketable commodity? Let us rather talk of your own concerns."

Could Katschuka have looked into his visitor's heart, he would have comprehended how deeply this question concerned Timar. He purposely spoke of Athalie because of a jealous thought that Timea's countenance had elicited a pleasant smile from the officer.

"Let us speak of more sensible things. My friend in Orsova writes me urgently to take you under my protection. Well, I will try to do so. You are not in a very agreeable situation. The ship in your charge has sunk. That is not your fault, but still your misfortune, for confidence in you has been shaken. Your superior has deprived you of your credentials, and it is a question of law how you can get them back. Then you would like to be of assistance to this poor orphan. I can see in your eyes that *her* loss troubles you more than your own. Now how can we manage all these things?"

"I do not know."

"But I do. Now listen. Next week the usual annual rendezvous of our troops takes place in the lower part of the town. About 20,000 men will be quartered there for seven weeks or more. Competitive proposals for the supply of bread at the cheapest price have been publicly invited. They pay large prices, and a clever fellow can make a handsome penny. All these offers pass through my hands, and I know beforehand who is to receive the contract. Up to date, Brasowitsch's offer is the most favourable. He proposes to furnish the bread for 140,000 florins, and promises the middle-man 20,000."

"The middle-man! Abominable!"

"Why, of course. With such extraordinary undertakings, it is right enough for him who receives the profit to give something to the man who procures for him the profit. That has always been so, since the world began! How otherwise can a body live? You know that very well."

"Yes, I know it; but I have never been willing to practise it to my own advantage."

"That is all nonsense. You burn your paws for another, when you might as well pick the chestnuts out of the fire for

yourself—if you only knew how. Send a sealed proposal to furnish the bread for 130,000 florins, and offer the middleman 30,000.”

“It is impossible for me to do this, for various reasons. In the first place, I have neither the necessary capital to invest so largely in flour and grain, nor inclination to lose my money, if I had money to lose. Then I am not so poor a financier but that I can compute the impossibility of furnishing the necessary supply for 130,000 florins, and still have 30,000 florins for a third party.”

The lieutenant laughed at his mode of reasoning.

“But Timar, my friend, what a wretched merchant you would make! There is no other way with us poor beggars to make a groschen with a florin. It is only retailing in druggist’s portions. A surety is the main thing, and I’ll stand good for that. We have been friends since our school-days. Trust yourself to me. Inclose the warranty bond over Brasowitsch’s 10,000 florin deposit. It will be accepted as security. I will tell you what to do then. Gallop back to Almasch and bid in the entire cargo of damaged corn yourself. Although worth 100,000 florins, you will probably get it for 10,000. Pay Brasowitsch immediately out of his 10,000 florins, left with you as levy on the whole; you will have quit scores with him then. See all the millers in the neighbouring villages, and promise them double rates if they will agree to grind the corn when you require it. Meanwhile put up a few ovens so that as soon as received the flour can be baked into bread. Inside of three weeks you will be sold out, and will find yourself with a clear profit of 70,000 florins. Should I tell this to your principal, he would play a grab-game for it. I am surprised that his common sense has not suggested it to him already.”

Timar carefully weighed the proposition. He thought it would be a charming thing to make, within three weeks, 60,000 or 70,000 florins, without much trouble, and with the amplest security. The first week the supply would be of sweeter bread than the customary allowance to soldiers; the second, it would be a trifle bitter; the third, a little musty. But one must not be over particular with the commissariat. Soldiers are not accustomed to bon-bons. Still the thought of the bitter bread made Timar shudder; or was it some other thought?

"O, Imre!" said he to the officer, calling him by his given name, "how were you ever initiated into all these secrets?"

"Hm," replied Imre, growing grave, "where such knowledge is best taught. When I first began my military career I was full of sentimental notions of honour and honesty. But I have since gone the natural way, and now you are surprised at me! Not a vestige of my silly boyish philosophy remains. I learned early that the way of the world is to look out for No. 1, and that no affair, even of the empire itself, is independent of the impetus of self-interest. When I prepared plans and specifications for fortifications, they were praised for their merit and classical ability, but were refused because they required too small appropriations of the public fund. Perhaps you know the story of His Majesty King Ferdinand. He visited us last year, and said to the commander of the fortress, 'I am surprised. I thought this fortress was black.' 'Why should it be black, Your Majesty?' 'Because in the list for annual supplies there is a regular item of 10,000 florins for ink. I took it for granted that every now and then the walls were given a coat of that desirable pigment.' Everybody laughed. If the little game is not discovered, we keep still; if it is, we laugh. Why should not *we* laugh too? Or is your conscience so tender that you prefer to stick to your daily two kreuzer profit. I've got over all my fanaticism. Go, comrade, to Almasch, and buy the damaged corn. You have till ten to-morrow night to get ready your proposition. I hear the driver snapping his whip. Make all possible speed, and return at once."

"I will give the matter serious consideration," said Timar thoughtfully.

"And more than all, you will do that poor girl a good turn, if you secure for her 10,000 florins—otherwise she will scarcely realise as many hundred, when the price of unlading is deducted."

This final observation kept ringing in Timar's ears. Some secret force was urging him forward. Fate draws the unwilling. Who can turn the tide of destiny?

Soon afterward, Timar was again sitting on the waggon, enveloped in his mantle, and travelling at full speed toward Almasch.

CHAPTER III.

THE RED HALF-MOON.

On the next day Timar and other brokers and dealers were assembled to bid for the sunken cargo. The bids were low, and slow in advancing. Timar, tired of this cheap bargaining, offered 10,000 gulden for the whole ship's lading. At this, all the other buyers stopped bidding, and any withdrawal on his part was impossible. The auctioneer accepted Timar's offer, and the whole cargo was now his property. Everybody said Timar was a fool. What could he do with such a quantity of damaged grain?

He had two pontoons made, he fastened them to the bow of the ship, and he began to unload her.

On the day before, the position of the vessel had shifted; the after-deck had sunk and the forward one had risen, so that the cabin was dry. Timar went into this in order to oversee the heavy work. The deck was torn up, and with the help of cranes the sacks of wheat were lifted one by one, placed first beside the cabin walls and then taken off to the shore. Here a bed of rushes had been made on which the wet grain was spread out to dry. Timar contracted with some of the millers for the immediate grinding of the wheat. The weather was favourable. There was a high wind, and the grain dried rapidly. If only the work could be got through quickly enough!

And then he began to reckon. He had only money enough to pay the labourers' wages. If the speculation did not turn out well, he would be a beggar. Johann Fabula said, all that would be left for Timar to do, would be to put the last empty sack on his head and jump into the Danube.

A thousand conflicting thoughts passed through Timar's brain. He watched the bringing up of the sacks all day long as they were put against the side of the cabin. Each one had the same mark—a wheel with five spokes painted in black on the canvass. The fugitive would have done better to have turned his property into cash. But why had he been so vigorously pursued? Had it been worth while to run off with this small amount of treasure, and then to take poison to baffle pursuit? The work went on till late in the afternoon, and now at least three thousand sacks of grain were saved.

Timar offered the men double wages, if they would finish unloading that night, for all the cargo left under water twelve hours longer would be unfit for bread.

The men worked with zeal. The wind dispersed the mists, and the crescent moon hung in the evening sky. The moon looked red in the rosy clouds. "Why do you pursue me so relentlessly?" said Timar to himself, and he turned his back upon the moon. He was counting the sacks of wheat ranged against the cabin walls, when once more the red half-moon stared him in the face. But this time it was painted on the side of one of the canvas-sacks. Where all the other sacks had been marked in black with the wheel of five spokes, this one had the half-moon painted in vermillion.


A tremor passed through Timar's whole body. His heart stood still. This was what the dying man had meant in his last words. But he had lacked time or confidence to explain himself more fully. What did this half-moon conceal?

While the labourers were carrying the bags ashore, Timar unperceived took this sack into the cabin and closed the door.

After two hours more labour, the tired men would work no longer. Cold and wet through, they hurried off to the nearest ale-house, and Timar was left alone on the ship. He explained that he must make up a few accounts as to the amount of the cargo saved, and that he would follow the men shortly on shore.

The moon mirrored her face in the water, and peeped into the cabin window.

Timar's hand trembled violently.



As he opened his knife he accidentally cut his hand; and his blood in fresh red spots spattered the sack beside the red half-moon. He cut the string which fastened the sack, and thrust his hand in. The bag contained good ripe wheat. He cut the lower part of the bag—wheat fell out of that too; then he slit the sack its whole length, and as the grain ran out, a large leather pouch fell at his feet.

It was locked. He broke it open, and poured the contents of the bag on the bed—on the very bed where the living statue had lain a little while before.

What a sight he saw in the moonlight! Long strings of rings tied together, in which were set sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds—bracelets of turquoise and opal—rows of pearls the size of a hazel-nut—a necklace of magnificent solitaire diamonds—and an onyx casket, in which he found, when he opened it, a handful of unset diamonds. At the bottom of the pouch he found also a quantity of brooches set with rubies, and, with these, four rolls of gold, each one containing five hundred roubles.

This was a treasure indeed! It could not be less than a million in value! This was worth the trouble of sending spies, constables, and a brigantine to regain! This was worth the attempt to escape pursuit, even at the bottom of the Danube, to save the plunder! This was worth the risk of passing the Iron Gate in a tempest! For the Saint Barbara carried a million roubles in her hold!

It was no illusion, no dream—it was reality. The treasures of Ali Tschorbadschi were scattered on the bed where Timea had lain, and whoever could have looked upon them would have seen that Ali had not been Governor of Candia in vain!

Timar stood trembling and bewildered, gazing upon this heap of treasure. The jewels glittered in the moonlight, and the man stared out of the cabin window at the moon. It seemed to him as if some living creature in the orb said to him, "To whom does this wealth belong? To whom should it belong but to you? You bought the ship's cargo as it stood. You risked everything you owned, in this wet grain. You bought, in good faith, all that was in the hold. What if gold and precious stones were there—they all belong to you. When the dying man spoke of the red half-moon, you did not understand his meaning. You bought the cargo

with quite a different view—to make bread for the soldiers; but fate decreed it otherwise. Yield to your destiny. To whom should the treasure belong? The Sultan stole it in his campaigns. The treasurer stole it from the Sultan. The Danube stole it from both. It belongs to nobody, if not to you, the finder. It is as much yours as it was the Sultan's, or the treasurer's, or the *Der* ...'s! But, Timea?"

At that question a dark cloud passed over the face of the moon, and hid it from sight.

Timar fell into a deep study, and by degrees the moon appeared again through the clouds.

"So much the better for you! A poor man is a nobody! When he has done his duty, he gets no credit. When he meets with a misfortune, he is called a rascal. If he can't earn his living, he may go and hang himself on a tree. If his heart aches, no woman cares to cure him. But as to the rich man, how everybody blesses and honours him! How friends surround him! How the fate of the country is intrusted to him! How women admire him! And if you took this treasure to Timea, and said to her, 'This is yours,' she would scarcely comprehend it. A basketful of sweetmeats! She is only a child! And if it were given to her guardian, who knows how much *she* would get out of it? There is no one to control *him*. Even if he dealt honestly by her, what would be the result for Timea? She would become a rich woman, who would scarcely look at you, a poor clerk, who would be mad to lift your eyes to her. But reverse the situation. Say, *you* are the rich man, *she* the poor woman; say, you keep the treasure on which you have stumbled. You can increase it, double it, treble it, and when you have put it on a firm basis, and made a fortune of millions, then you can go to her and say, 'All this is yours, and myself into the bargain.' What wrong will you be doing her? You will make her rich and happy. Having such good intentions, you may sleep with an easy conscience!"

The moon was sinking into the Danube, and yet it gleamed like a beacon. Its beams danced on the waves, and every ray and every wave said to Timar, "A fortune is in your hands—clutch it—hold it fast! No one will be the

wiser. The only man who knew of it lies at the bottom of the Danube."

Timar listened to the voices of wind and wave, and heard also a remonstrance within his own heart. Cold sweat stood on his brow.

The last moonbeam disappeared, as the orb sunk below the Danube; and as it faded, it seemed to say—

"You are rich. You are master of all things!"

But through the darkness, a voice trembled, a whisper fell upon his ear—

"You are a thief!"

An hour later, a four-horse post-wagon galloped along the turnpike road from Szöny, and when the clock of the church of St. Andrew struck eleven in Komorn, this carriage halted before the inn that bore the sign of the double-headed eagle.

Timar sprang out, and hurried into the house.

He was expected there.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOLD MINE.

After the military rendezvous at Komorn, Timar suddenly became a well-to-do man of the world. He went so far as to buy a house in the most desirable street of that commercial town. Nobody thought it strange. What were his profits on the army contract? There were no means of knowing exactly. It was easily perceived that all at once he was a man of power, and whatever he touched turned to gold.

In commerce and in speculation this does not provoke criticism. The foundation only is difficult to lay. The first hundred thousand may cost labour and untold anxiety; but this sum obtained, everything else follows as a natural result. One has unlimited credit then.

Athanas Brasowitsch, notwithstanding, was in a quandary. He could not divest the problem of its mystery. He guessed rightly that Timar had underbid him largely, and had thereby obtained the purveyance by which Athanas had heretofore

enriched himself. But how could the emoluments be so fat, if the bid was so low? It was a very difficult proposition to elucidate.

Since Timar had established himself as a man of independence, his social advancement had been rapid. Brasowitsch noticeably sought the friendship of his former supercargo, and frequently invited him home, evenings. These favours were readily accepted by Timar, for they furnished him convenient opportunities for seeing Timea, who was already making progress in the Hungarian tongue.

Mrs. Sophie always received him cordially too, now; and one day remarked to Athalie, in a half-buzzing, half-shrill voice, "It would really do no harm if she too had some pleasant smiles and glances for their visitor, for he was a very rich man. There could be no possible objection to such a match. He was worth three army officers, who have nothing but gay uniforms and debts."

Whereupon Athalie answered
"It does not follow necessarily that I should desire to marry my father's servant."

Madame Sophie could supply the preliminary to this dry speech with "Because *my* father chose to marry his housemaid, it does not follow," etc. A well-deserved reflection with reference to Madame Brasowitsch, who had presumed to make herself the mother of so genteel a young lady.

One evening, towards the end of supper, after the ladies had withdrawn, the host, more cordial even than usual, clinked glasses, and drank his guest's health repeatedly. Brasowitsch was a virtuoso in the art of imbibing, while Timar's experience with the fruit of the vine had been moderate. When the social barometer rose to the degree of convivial confidence, the host introduced the subject nearest his heart in a highly amusing manner.

"Now, my dear Michael, tell me, on your honour, how could you earn so much out of that provision contract? Believe me, I've tried it to my heart's content, and know how much can be screwed out of it. I, too, mixed bran, chaff, and miller's dust with my flour; and, though I scarcely knew the difference between rye and wheat, I *did* understand how to adulterate both to my own profit. Yet I never knew enough to make what *you* have made. With what kind of

witchery did you do it? Come, tell me all about it; that's a good fellow."

Timar, blinking like one who is half-seas-over, and who needs special assistance to lift his eyelids, replied jokingly, in a maudlin tone—

"Well, you know, Mr.——"

"Do not Mister me, but call me by my Christian name, as I do you, Mischka dear."

"You know, Anastasio, there was really no witchcraft. You remember that I purchased for a mere bagatelle the damaged cargo of the Saint Barbara—got it for a florin a bushel. I was not fool enough to divide it, as everybody thought I would, amongst millers, peasants, and cattle-raisers; but I had it ground with all possible speed, and baked through and through. It went much farther than if I had used the best family flour."

"Brave fellow! There is something left for me to learn in my old age! But, Mischka, wasn't that pretty poor fodder for the soldiers? Wasn't it a great risk?"

"Naturally, it was bad enough; actually tainted."

Timar laughed a drunken laugh as he said it.

"But did they not complain of you at the Commissary Department?"

"What would have been the good? I had the whole department twisted and in my pocket."

"What about the Field-Marshal and the General-in-Charge?"

"*They* were all in my pocket, too;" and he significantly struck the capacious pouch which furnished room for so many men of position.

"And you fed the soldiers on this damaged wheat?"

"Swallowed bread never speaks!—Of course I did."

"Well, well, Michael, my boy, you can tell *me* all this, if you like; it is safe here," putting his hand on his breast; "but how it would delight an enemy of yours to get hold of it! The soles of your shoes would burn. You are on dangerous ground. Yes, your beautiful house would go, I promise you. Let me impress it upon you not to mention it to another person."

Timar began, as if in a drunken fright, to implore Brasowitsch not to betray his secret—kissing his hand beseechingly.

Brasowitsch magnanimously pacified him with every as-

surance that the world could never know it through *him*. He then called his valet, and ordered him to see Herr Timar safely to his own house. The servant returned with the information that he had great difficulty in controlling Timar, who did not recognise his own door. However, he had, at last, put him quietly to bed.

Timar, as soon as the valet was gone, rose, and wrote letters far into the morning.

He was certain as the day followed the night that Brasowitsch would denounce him, and make public the whole story; and he was as morally certain to whom the information would go.

Before many days, Timar's secret was in some underhanded way betrayed to the Komorn exchequer. Woe to him if a musty piece of his bread comes to light! But none ever came. The commission occupied a whole week, day and night, in making a critical examination. No witnesses could be found who said aught against him. It was proved that not a spoonful of this wet grain ever entered a soldier's mouth, but that Timar had distributed it amongst the millers, cattle-drovers, and manufacturers. The soldiers testified that they never had been served with better bread than during the two weeks of their encampment at Komorn.

It ended in the Purveyor's Department feeling sadly aggrieved at the implication that they did not know good provisions from bad, or would be a party to so palpable a fraud. The investigating committee left the city in haste, with a consciousness of having been entrapped. Vehement apologies were offered to Timar, and the exclamation, "He is always in luck!" followed him everywhere.

Lieutenant Katschuka was the first to congratulate him after his release.

"My friend, you ought not to let the matter rest here. You should have a glittering remuneration for this mortification. Just fancy, it brought *me* into contumely as well as you. Now go directly to Vienna, and demand satisfaction. Strike while the iron is hot. You may rest assured that no one will attempt to throw you out of your saddle again."

Timar assented.

Brasowitsch deplored to Timar, louder than anyone else, the ignominy that his dear friend had suffered: "But who could have been so cruel and malicious?"

"Whoever it was," replied Timar, "need look to his own concerns. I'll wager it will cost him his house and lot some day, if he resides in Komorn, to pay for his little joke. Day after to-morrow, I am going to Vienna to ask indemnity from the Court-in-Chancery."

"Go, go!" said Brasowitsch under his breath; "I'll get ahead of you this time."

Brasowitsch went to the capital the next day. He spent no end of money to vent his malice. And he had the satisfaction, through his former business relations, to prepare so intricate a labyrinth for his successful rival that Timar would rue the day he ever thought of applying for indemnification.

"Now let Timar look for his rights, if he wants to be fool enough," he chuckled to himself.

Timar did not prove to be of the stuff of which fools are made. He had already outstripped his advisers, both of them, in subtilty and cunning. His first steps towards self-aggrandisement had made him crafty; and from that hour he learned effectually to keep his own counsel.

Self had become the propelling power of every action of his life.

In possession of the treasures of Ali Tschorbadtschi, it behoved him to get a certificate, upon the strength of which he might appear entitled to them, "to the manner born." A pretext—a title—something tangible was positively requisite to enable him to introduce these valuables, little by little, to the world. And so he went to Vienna.

He had letters of introduction from the Komorn Protectorate to some of the wealthiest and most influential gentlemen in the brilliant capital. He decided to place these letters at the bottom of his trunk, and take his course independent of any man's advice except his own. Aware that he was justified in petitioning an indemnity for past injury, he boldly stepped forward to ask an interview with the Minister.

His Excellency the Minister was a tall, smoothly-shaven gentleman, with an imposing double chin, heavy eyebrows, and bald head. He wore on his breast numerous medallions, indicative of great service to the State. He had his hands crossed under the skirts of his frock coat. Timar was attired in a plain suit of black.

His excellency's first question was—

"Does not the gentleman understand that he should wear a sword when he desires an audience?"

"I am no nobleman, worthy Sir; only Michael Timar, from Komorn."

"Ah! And you come, then, I believe, to demand pecuniary satisfaction for the wrong you consider done to yourself in the recent commitment and examination?"

"That is farthest from me, your excellency. The Government only fulfilled its duty in closely investigating what to all appearance gave suspicion of fraud. On the contrary, I am under obligations not only to the informer, but also to the judges, for through their very thorough examination the fact was made public that I honestly carried out the enterprise intrusted to me."

"Then you do not propose to apply for reimbursement?"

"I should consider that a very injurious precedent to establish. My honour is restored. I have no revenge in my nature, neither have I time nor inclination to indulge myself against the falsifier who has done me this wrong. Let what has happened be forgotten."

At these words his excellency drew one hand from under his coat to stroke Timar's shoulder approvingly.

"You really take practical common sense views of life. Not to have time for litigation or revenge is a sensible view of things. But with what intention did you call then?"

"To make an offer."

"An offer?"

"Yes, for which the favour of your excellency is requisite."

The nobleman put back his hand quickly under his frock.

"The Government owns an estate within the Illyrian boundary, Levetinczy."

"What do you wish with it?"

"I know the land very well, because I formerly was a corn-buyer in the neighbourhood. It consists of 30,000 acres, rented at forty kreuzer per acre to the Viennese banker, Silverman. He has divided the land into parcels, and leases to under-tenants at a good rate of interest. These under-tenants again subdivide the ground, and relet to the poor people in the surrounding country. For two years the crops have been a failure, not even furnishing seed-corn. No money has been paid by the peasantry to the under-tenants. These in turn could not meet their obligations to the chief

lessee, and he to save himself has just gone into bankruptcy. The result is, that the public treasury is minus just now 20,000 florins. My most humble proposition is, that I would like to lease the Levetinczy estate for a term of ten years, at the price paid by the second tenants to Silverman. The land is lying fallow. November is now drawing to a close, and the present lessee can of course pay nothing. I agree to make good not only this year's loss, but will indemnify the State for the last year's also." And he took a folded paper out of his pocket.

The minister tapped his gold snuffbox nervously two or three times, and drew his lips violently together. It was beyond his comprehension.

"But one must honour him. He is born to good luck!" This he thought; he said, "You are a gallant fellow. You were wronged by us; you endured it patiently. You will realise that this is the true way for the patriotic citizen to act. To prove to you that the Government knows how to appreciate men of such sound sentiments, I will guarantee to you that the proposal shall be accepted. You may call at the bureau again this evening; I can assure you of success."

Timar handed the written proposition to the minister, and deferentially bowed himself out.

This man pleased the minister amazingly. First, he voluntarily forgives the State a serious injury done him. Secondly, he offers the Government a more advantageous bargain by fifty per cent than any previous arrangement. Better than all, he steps forward to lend a helping hand just when the treasury is in a crippled condition. He must be triply made of money.

As Timar sought his excellency towards evening on that day, everyone he passed on going into the inner chamber of the bureau had a smile for the stranger. His fame had already gone before him. The minister came to the door to meet him, and led him to his writing-desk. There lay a legal document, signed and sealed with the great seal of the empire.

"Please read it through, and see whether it meets your approbation."

The first thing that puzzled Timar was the fact that the stipulations read, "for a period of twenty years," instead of the expected ten.

"Are you satisfied with the length of the lease?" Why should he not be? But what almost stupefied him was his own name, which appeared in the document as *Michael Timar, Baronet of Levetinczy*.

"Baronet Michael Timar, of Levetinczy!"

It was the sweetest music he had ever heard.

"The armorial bearings will be sent you by special messenger," the minister said, while graciousness beamed from his face.

Timar signed his name, together with his title, with a firm hand, as if the title had been his always.

"Do not hasten; I have something still of moment to say to you. It is the duty and pleasure of our Government to especially distinguish high-minded citizens, who, like yourself, have shown a true patriotic spirit. Can you mention some one, for example, who is worthy of decoration with the Order of the Iron Crown?"

After a moment's consideration Michael replied, "Yes, indeed. Your excellency, I will be so bold as to recommend a good man, who for a long time has enjoyed the respect of everyone; who in secret is the benefactor of the whole neighbourhood in which he resides. I refer to Cyrill Schandorowitsch, Dean of Pleszkovatz."

The minister stepped back startled; such a man as Timar he had never known before. Instead of making a suggestion of personal interest, he goes to the ends of the earth after a poor priest, of not even his own faith, and pointing to him says, "He is a more worthy man than I. Here is gold, pure and unalloyed."

Since the invitation had been made, the minister was compelled to treat the suggestion in a serious manner.

"Well, well, we will attend to it; but the distribution of orders is always preceded by a series of ceremonies. It would never do to have the Crown's suggestion refused, therefore his reverence the dean ought to make a formal application."

"This highly deserving gentleman," replied Timar, "is exceedingly modest. He would scarcely take the initiative in such a measure."

"Ah! I understand. A few lines in my own hand then will perhaps do. Since you recommend it, the State will recognise and recompense."

In a moment there was in Timar's hand a note with a few

encouraging words, addressed to his reverence the Dean of Pleszkovatz, in which the dean was assured that his hitherto unacknowledged benefactions, if he wished it, should be publicly noticed through the decoration of the Iron Crown. Timar thanked the stately minister.

It was evening before all the legal papers, properly attested and sealed, were safe in Timar's leather bag; and then he hastened—whither? not to eat, nor yet to sleep. He hastened to the station whence the express coaches for Zimony start. He put in his pocket a sandwich, and then shouted out to the first driver—"A gulden for every five miles as 'pour boire,' and double fare for a quick journey! Spare neither horses nor whip."

Two minutes later they were galloping at fullest speed through the paved streets that lead out of Vienna.

It mattered little to them how loud the police called out that it was against the law to use the whip within the city limits.

Timar sat upon the wagon, scarcely stepping down to eat during two days and two nights. They changed horses at each of the post stations, but not a moment was lost by tarrying for food or sleep. At the close of the third day, he reached the village where lay the Manor of Levetinczy. It was mild weather, although in the early December days. He at once called upon the supervisor, and introduced himself as the new lessee. He gave orders that the old farmers should continue as tenants, and be allowed half the harvests; but that, as the ground had lain fallow for two successive years, there must be a very rich harvest the coming season.

"But where is the seed to come from?" was every peasant's cry. "There is none to be had for love or money."

Timar comforted them each and all. If the ground was only ready, the seed-corn would be provided. Upon his assurances, the fields that had brought forth nothing but thistles for two seasons were soon upturned by the plough.

Timar knew where to seek for the present sowing.

The next day found him in Pleszkovatz, where, a few months before, his life had been threatened, and where he had received the cold shoulder from Dean Schandorowitsch.

"Well, my son, you here again?" was his greeting. "You wish to buy corn? I told you two months ago that I had none, could give you none."

"I have a governmental commission this time, believe me; and I beg your honour to open wide the granaries, where I am sure is stored a three years' harvest at least. It is to be devoted to a noble purpose—seed for these poor people who have been at starvation's point so long; and, moreover, the service cannot fail to meet approbation in the eyes of the administration. I do not want it for myself; it is for the people; they are to have the benefit. I come as messenger from the Vienna authorities."

"Precious little the authorities know about you, or me either; we are nothing but frogs in their eyes. You know that *you* want the corn; why do you not confess the truth?"

Timar made no reply, but quietly drew from his pocket the minister's letter, and handed it to the dean.

The good man's astonishment knew no bounds. He could scarcely believe his own eyes. But there, on the outside, were actually the seals with the two-headed eagle, and within were the stamps of the high court of the exchequer. It was all true. There could be no fraud about it.

And had it not been the *ne plus ultra* of his dreams, to wear on his breast this shining cross?

Timar had discovered this weakness in him long ago, as they sat chatting over their mugs upon the completion of some business transaction. The dean's darling wish was within his grasp. It made the old patriarch more friendly by several degrees of warmth. Up to this moment he had not even offered Timar a chair.

"Sit down, my brother; tell me how it comes about that you are on such excellent terms with his honour the minister of the exchequer? How did he happen to send this precious letter by you?"

Timar related a little story with rich colouring; that he had left the employ of Brasowitsch, and was now in the service of the Government; that through a combination of circumstances he had obtained great influence with his excellency the minister; and that he himself had mentioned his good old friend as a candidate for the proposed honour.

"I always knew you were not the fool you looked," said the priest, with a complimentary bow, "and that is why I have always liked you so well. And because you have so true and honest a face, you shall have the corn. How much did you want? 10,000, 12,000 bushels? You shall have all

there is in the storehouse. Do not believe that I do this on account of the minister. On the contrary, I do it for your own dear sake. Your good face, and your unselfish interest in the poor, have opened my heart. What did I tell you? that you might have it at five florins? no, you shall take it at your own price. Will you pay cash? I can just as well go up to Vienna after the money, because I consider it my duty to return thanks in person to his excellency. What kind of a man is he? Tell me something about him. Is he tall, short, friendly, severe? Is he fond of absinthe wine? You shall try some too."

All in vain did Timar protest that it was necessary for him to return to Levetinczy that night, in order to instruct the stewards to send immediately for the much-desired corn. His cordial host insisted on providing messengers himself, rather than not have his dear Michael over night with him. And so they chatted together far into the morning. Or, rather, Timar listened and sipped, while the priest both talked and drank a steady stream.

The next day, bright and early, the peasants far and near drove into the court. When they saw that the three-storied granary was actually open and at his disposal, they looked upon Timar as a holy worker in miracles. Success attended him everywhere. Others had sown their seed in October. This month was dry and windy, and the ground squirrels consumed the corn before it had time to germinate. Whoever planted in November was equally unfortunate, for the unexpected snow rotted the young and tender sprouts. It promised a long thaw now, till Christmas at least. If Timar could successfully take advantage of this mild period, a fine harvest would be assured.

And so it proved. His planting returned to him a sixfold crop.

That year Timar carried up to Komorn thirty ship loads of the very finest produce. And he controlled the market; he had it all his own way with his competitors. It was the cat and mouse game. He could lower the price of corn at his own sweet will. The usual gathering of produce dealers met every evening in the café under Brasowitsch's residence. It was an indignation meeting nightly.

"This mushroom upstart of a Timar trampling under foot every legitimate merchant of long standing! It is impossible

to compete with him in the market. He has money as plenty as hay, and wastes it as if he had stolen it. We would be justified in throttling him if he ever darkened the exchange, but he keeps away, the rascal!"

He was never seen in the company of business men. No one knew what new project he had in mind, until it was far advanced beyond all fear of failure. Failure? He did not know what the word meant. Whatever he touched, turned to gold.

The strangest thing of all was, what kept him in Komorn? Why did he not remove to the great city of Vienna? Why should so rich a man live in such an unpretentious town?

Timar knew what kept him there, where every business man stabs his secret enemy, through jealousy and envy. Instead of a blessing, the malediction, "May he break his precious neck!" usually followed him when he was seen to pass the Brasowitsch Café.

"This house must be mine yet, together with all that is precious in it."

And this feeling was what tied him down to the little commercial town long after he was a millionaire many times over.

He knew, too, how to connect with his title of nobility noble, generous actions. He founded a large hospital for the aged and indigent. He offered substantial prizes for merit to the students in the various institutions of learning. He presented the church with an elaborate gold communion service, in exchange for their dilapidated silver one. His gates were always open to the needy. On Fridays, half way down the street, the road was blocked by a procession of the destitute, who were on hand for the regular weekly distribution of a poor fund. It was known far and near that he educated the orphans of drowned sailors, and provided their unfortunate widows with a steady pension.

"A wonderful money-maker! Rich as Croesus! And yet how good!"

Nevertheless, a still small voice said constantly within him, "It is not true—it is not true: you are a thief!"

CHAPTER V.

A MAIDEN'S JEST.

Herr Brasowitsch was in the habit of drinking his black coffee after dinner in his wife's drawing-room, pitilessly dropping his snuff around at the same time.

Herr Katschuka said soft words to Athalie, near a small table, at the corner of which Mrs. Sophie sat as if she were sewing something. For more than a year all sorts of embroidery and plain sewing had been scattered on this table, so that every visitor might see that the wedding outfit was being made. Herr Katschuka almost lived in the house. He came early in the morning, and stayed till noon—he came again, and didn't go home till late at night. It seemed as if the fortifications of Komorn must be pretty nearly finished, since the engineer-in-charge had so much time to give to Athalie.

But meanwhile his own fortifications were being undermined. The time for the wedding was near, but he was not ready. He excused himself with boldness, and if driven from one point, he retreated like a hero to another. He had always some plausible pretence for postponing the marriage. But the last ditch was reached finally. The "caution-money" was raised by an acceptance on the house of Brasowitsch & Co., which the Councillor of War took instead of cash down; a house was found for the young couple, and at the last moment Katschuka was promoted to be captain. There was nothing more to do but to capitulate and take the maiden to wife.

Herr Brasowitsch grew more venomous every day, as he

drank his coffee with the ladies, and Timar was the cause of this venom. Timar was his daily apparition!

"What wouldn't this man think of! When winter comes every merchant is glad to have some rest, but this fellow busies himself with things that nobody else would imagine possible. He leases the Platten-sea, and fishes under the ice! It is a regular robbery. He is destroying the fisheries—there won't be a shad or a perch left. Cursed, crazy man! He ought to be hunted down as a common enemy! I'll kill the fellow myself, sooner or later. When he is going over the bridge, I'll get two sailors to seize him and fling him into the Danube! I'll give anybody a hundred gulden to shoot him! He ought to have his house burnt down over his head! He steals us all out of house and home! And they have made a nobleman of him! They have nominated him as assessor, and I shall have to sit with him! I, whose grandfather was a Hungarian noble, must sit in council with this vagabond! But if he dares to show his face there, I'll get a party of noblemen to join me, and toss him out of the window! I'll break his neck for him! I hear he is round visiting ladies too—this nobody, this mudsill, this Timar! I wish some good officer would run him through the body, like a spitted frog!"

And Brasowitsch looked significantly at Herr Katschuka, who pretended not to hear a word of all this. But what he did hear gave him the conviction that the new millionaire was making a breach in Herr Brasowitsch's fortune, and this did not increase the officer's desire to hasten the nuptials.

"I won't wait for anybody else to kill him," continued Brasowitsch; "I'll do it myself! I have a sword-cane that I bought hoping to use it on the fellow. If I meet him, and he and I are alone, I'll run him through! I'll stick him on the wall like a bat! I mean it!"

And he rolled his eyes wildly, to make the oath seem more dreadful. Then he drank his coffee, put on his overcoat, and said he must go out on business. Yes; but the business was card-playing—though he didn't say so. He would be home early—yes, early in the morning, he might have added.

As he descended the winding stairs carefully (for his corpulent body was not of the kind to take the down-going steps comfortably), whom should he meet coming up but Timar! Now Brasowitsch has him at his mercy! They are in a dark narrow place, where nobody can see them. Timar is without

a weapon; he has not even a walking-stick, while Herr Brasowitsch is armed with his sword-cane! But Brasowitsch, on recognising Timar, stuck his dagger under his left arm, and lifting his hat, cried out, "Your servant, Sir; I wish the gracious Herr Levetinczy good afternoon!"

Whereupon Timar answered, "Your servant, Brasowitsch. Are you out again on business?"

"He, he, he!" laughed Athanas, as if it were a great joke. "Come now, won't you go with me?"

"Certainly not. If you want me to give you a couple hundred gulden I'll do so; but I don't care to go and play cards all the evening, for the sake of getting rid of this sum!"

"He, he, he! Then go to the ladies, they are at home! Amuse yourself with them, if you prefer it."

And so they part with mutual hand-shakings. For no one must take Herr Brasowitsch's threats seriously. His voice and manner are the only things that are terrible. No one is afraid of him—not even his wife! She least of all.

The world never saw such a loving society as the guests and inmates of the house of Brasowitsch. Herr Brasowitsch knew that Captain Katschuka had been the first to open the door of advancement to Timar. He knew also that the officer would like nothing better than to make way for his rival Timar, and be forbidden the house. But the father was resolved not to let the bridegroom off in this fashion.

Captain Katschuka sees that his old friend is daily paying court to Athalie, and instead of hating his rich rival, he could forgive his old schoolmate if he took his bride off his hands!

Athalie looks down on Timar as her father's former clerk. She loves Katschuka passionately. Yet she acts as if she admired Timar, in her bridegroom's presence, hoping to make her lover jealous!

Mrs. Sophie hates Timar. And yet she receives him graciously, as if she would say, "Only let me be once his mother-in-law, and have him living in the same house with me!"

They all would be rejoiced at Timar's downfall; and yet he visits the house, kisses the hands of the ladies, presses the hands of the men, and acts as if all the household were his dearest friends. They receive him graciously. Athalie plays the piano for him. Mrs. Sophie urges him to stay to supper. And Timea comes forward to set the table. When she appears,

Timar has no ears for what Miss Athalie says or plays. He has eyes only for one person. The girl is in her fifteenth year, and yet is in figure a fully developed woman, while the unconscious innocence of her glances shows that in spirit she is still a mere child. She speaks Hungarian with a foreign accent, and now and then hesitates—being at a loss for a word; or she makes use of a wrong expression, so that nobody can help laughing. This pleases Athalie—who likes to make sport of Timea.

The poor child is the butt of all possible jests. Athalie gives her her old clothes to wear. But the fashions change in marvellous ways in all civilised lands. What is admirable to-day is ridiculous to-morrow. It pleases Athalie to make a laughing-stock of Timea. The poor girl, who knows nothing of European costumes, like all barbarians, loves extravagant colours and forms. The unusual pleases her. When she puts on some bright silk, entirely out of fashion, or adorns herself with a monstrous comb and dresses her hair in a style that has long since passed by, she is delighted at her own appearance; and if anybody laughs who sees her, she regards this as a sign of admiration. By her odd manner of dressing, she has attracted everybody's attention, and is called the "mad Turkish girl."

All manner of jests could be played upon her without her taking them amiss. She was too childlike and simple to understand that anyone was making sport of her. Athalie enjoyed nothing more than turning the girl into ridicule, especially in the presence of men. She encouraged her guests to pretend to pay court to Timea. It amused her if Timea took these jesting courtesies in earnest, and when men gave the girl enormous bouquets, or paid her extravagant compliments, Athalie delighted in seeing Timea made to appear absurd before all the company.

Mrs. Sophie treated the girl in just the opposite manner. She scolded her continually.

"You simpleton, can't you take hold of a cup in a better way? Will you never know which is Athalie's spoon? How did you daub your dress? Do you think you can have a new one every day? Why did you break that dish? You are worse than a kitchen-maid. If *she* breaks anything, she must pay for it out of her wages—but there's nothing to be got out of *you*, whatever mischief you do."

Then Athalie would come to Timea's defence—"What makes you scold Timea so, mother? You talk to her as if she were a servant, and you know very well she is not one. I don't like it that you treat her in this way!"

Timea would kiss Mrs. Sophie's hand to keep her from scolding, and Athalie's to thank her for her kindness. She was a modest, grateful creature!

Madame Sophie waited till Timea was out of sight, and then said to her daughter, but so that both Timar and Capt. Katschuka might hear—

"It would be better for her to be treated like a servant. You know how unlucky she is. The money that Timar, I mean Herr Levetinczy, saved for her, was put at interest, and was all lost; so she has nothing left but the gown to her back."

"Ah, you have made her a pauper!" Timar said to himself; and he felt as happy as if he had just got through with a whole year's term of teaching school.

"It amazes me," said Athalie, "that she is so unmoved by everything: whether one scolds her or makes fun of her, her countenance never changes, and she has no colour."

"That is on account of her Greek race," said Timar.

"No, it is not," retorted Athalie; "it is a sign of ill-health. Many girls at boarding-school had the same pallor, because they ate chalk and slate pencils."

Athalie said this to Timar, but with her eyes on Herr Katschuka. But her affianced looked only into a mirror on the wall, to see whether Timea was coming in again at the door opposite.

Athalie noticed this, and so too did Timar.

Timea returned, bringing a tray with glasses, and her whole attention was fixed upon her burden, for fear she might let it fall.

"Take care!" shrieked Madame Sophie, and the girl was so startled that she dropped her tray. All the glasses fell to the floor. Fortunately they fell on the rug, and were not broken. Madame Sophie began to scold, but Athalie interrupted her—"It was all your own fault. Why did you shout so? Timea shall stay here with me, and the maid-servant may lay the table."

As Timea dropped her tray, Herr Katschuka, with a soldier's gallantry, sprang to pick up the glasses, and, collecting them, had put them once more on the waiter.

The grateful look which sparkled in Timea's black eyes did not escape the notice either of Timar or Athalie.

"O captain," whispered Athalie, "let's play a little joke on Timea. Flirt with her a wee bit. Timea, come sit at table with us, and beside Herr Katschuka."

Was this a jest, or was it scorn? Was it the outgrowth of jealousy, or was it malice? We shall see.

The captain, as ordered, paid Timea graceful compliments, to the child's great embarrassment. She dropped the negus tongs in trying to put a lump of sugar in her tea.

"Use your own pretty white hands!" said the captain; and Timea, in her confusion, dropped the sugar into her glass of water instead of her tea-cup. Nobody had ever told her before that she had pretty hands. The words re-echoed in her thoughts, and she cast stolen glances at her hands to see if they were white and pretty.

Athalie could hardly keep from laughing outright, all this so amused her. She urged on her betrothed to do and say many other flattering things, till Timea's head was quite turned.

There is nothing easier than to fascinate a damsel of fifteen. And Herr Katschuka was a man who naturally paid court to every woman whom he met; not even the servant maids escaped his pretty speeches. It was his ambition to make every woman's heart beat quicker at the sight of his uniform. He lent himself readily to his betrothed lady's wish. Timea was still a child, but a lovely one, who would soon be a most beautiful woman; and he flattered her and paid court to her unceasingly, and this to the great satisfaction of Athalie.

Once at night Athalie said to Timea, when she was about going to sleep, "The captain wants to marry you! Would you accept him?"

The child looked up at Athalie with a timid glance, and drew the bedclothes over her head so that nobody should see her; and Athalie laughed quietly, as she knew by Timea's restlessness that she could not sleep.

The jest had succeeded.

The next day Timea appeared unusually serious; she had lost her childish unconsciousness, and was thoughtful, melancholy, and silent.

The spell had done its work well.

Then Athalie interested the whole family in her joke. She

induced them all to treat Timea as if she were to be the bride of Herr Katschuka. Even the servants and her mother played into her hands. No one dared to betray the jest, and it was a serious jest indeed !

Athalie said, "See, here is a betrothal ring for you, which the captain sends you ; but he cannot put it on your finger while you are still a heathen. You must be baptized and become a Christian."

And Timea, with bowed head and hands folded on her breast, consented.

"But you must first learn the catechism, Bible history, the Psalms, and ten commandments."

Timea assented again. And every day and half the night she studied like a school-girl. It was hard work, for she was unused to study ; and the catechism was, above all, a horrible task ; yet what would she not do, in order to be baptized !

"She never would have been converted, and never would have studied like this," said Athalie to Timar, "if she had not had the hope of marriage."

And Timar had to look on and see this frightful game played upon the innocent child without saying a word against it. And what could he have said to her ? She would not have understood him, had he tried to explain. His frequent visits aided the deception. The girl heard from everybody that the rich Herr Levetinczy came to the house for the sake of Athalie. It seemed to her quite natural that the rich man should want a rich wife. They were suited to each other ; and what more reasonable than that the poor Hungarian officer should marry the poor daughter of a Turkish soldier ? This seemed to her in the fitness of things, and so she studied day and night.

Then they found a new joke to play upon her. They told her she must have a fine outfit of clothing for the wedding, and the bride herself must sew every stitch of the under-garments, dresses, and wedding-gown. That Timea understood perfectly. It was the custom among the Turks also. And she knew how to sew and to embroider exquisitely.

And so they gave her Athalie's wedding-dress to embroider, telling her it was her own. She designed all sorts of arabesques, and under her fingers the gown became a work of art. Even when visitors came she kept on with her embroidery ; and she liked this, because she need not raise her eyes to look

any one in the face. And so she did not see the sly glances and mocking smiles about her; the nods and winks exchanged between the guests to whom the jest had been confided. Poor little fool!

But Timar saw it all. How often, as he left the house in the bitterness of his heart, he looked at the marble columns at the foot of the staircase and felt a desire to pull them down with the house above them, as Samson had done for the Philistines.

The very day to which Timea looked forward with such hope was the day set for the marriage of Katschuka and Athalie.

Yet there were some hindrances in the way of the wedding—not in the aspect of the sky, nor in the hearts of the betrothed, for they loved each other as much as was necessary; but in the business affairs of Herr Brasowitsch.

When the young officer had asked the hand of Athalie, he had told her father frankly the state of his own finances. He had just money enough to live as an officer must, and keep up appearances in the world; but he could not support a wife, especially one used to comforts and luxury. He could not marry, therefore, unless his bride brought him a dowry of 100,000 gulden; and this he said plumply and plainly to Herr Brasowitsch. The merchant made no objection; he did not haggle about the matter, but promised to give his daughter the desired sum as her marriage portion.

And when he promised it, he meant to keep his word. But since then Timar had come in to make trouble. He had in so many ways upset Brasowitsch's schemes, and interfered with his plans, that it was not so easy for the merchant to raise 100,000 gulden. Brasowitsch suggested to the bridegroom that he should leave the capital in his hands, and take merely the interest on it each year. His wife might squander the principal if she had it. Would it not be wiser to let it remain in her father's hands as an investment? But the officer would not agree to this, and threatened to blow the whole scheme of the marriage to the four winds unless the 100,000 gulden were paid before the ceremony.

Herr Brasowitsch was at his wit's end. If there was one person who watched the sewing, on which Timea's hands were so busily engaged, more bitterly than Timar did, that person was Herr Brasowitsch.

Yet a wild hope entered Brasowitsch's mind. If there could be an exchange of husbands! He hated Timar; but if he would only marry Athalie, all would be saved. Though Timar was a vagabond and a rascal, yet if he married his daughter he would become a respectable man. The enmity would cease between them; he would no longer be a rival in business, but a partner; and all the money matters could be set right.

And why should not this plan work? Timar visits the house often, and whom does he come to see if not Athalie? Of course, as he knows she is betrothed, he dares not speak; but timid men must be helped.

One afternoon Brasowitsch took a double portion of anisette cordial with his coffee, to bolster up his courage, and carried the flask into his own room, telling the ladies, if Timar came to ask him to join him, as he had a word or two to say to him.

In his own room Brasowitsch lighted his Turkish pipe, and blew so much tobacco smoke around him, that he seemed like some great cuttlefish lying in wait for his prey.

And the prey soon appeared.

As Timar entered, the cuttlefish swam through the smoky sea, and fixed his eyes upon the victim, like a huge sea-monster, and roared out—

“What do you mean by coming to my house so often? What brings you here? What are your intentions as to my daughter?”

This is a capital way to attack a man. Taken by surprise, he sees the world begin to whirl about him, and before he knows it, he has fallen—and where? Why, into holy matrimony.

It is a frightful thing to be called upon to answer such a question all of a sudden.

But Timar's first thought was that Herr Brasowitsch had drunk too much anisette, for only anisette could make him such a hero.

“My good Sir,” said Timar quietly, “I have no intentions with regard to your daughter, nor could I have, since she is already provided with a bridegroom who is one of my best friends. Why do I visit your house? I will tell you. It is because I promised your unfortunate kinsman that I would look after the welfare of his orphan child. I come here to see how you are behaving towards the girl intrusted to you.

And you are behaving towards her shamefully. That I tell you to your face. You have cheated the orphan out of her little property. Cheated is the only word! And your whole family are carrying on a cruel jest with the poor child. You are embittering her soul for life. God will punish you for it! And now, Herr Brasowitsch, we meet for the last time in your house, and woe to you if the hour comes when I enter it again!"

Timar turned as he uttered these last sentences, and left the room, slamming the door after him.

The cuttlefish sank back in his chair, swallowed a third glass of anisette, and thought that something ought to have been said in reply to Timar. But what? He hardly knew.

Timar returned to the reception room, not merely because he had left his hat there, but for other reasons. He found no one there but Timea. Athalie and her lover were in the next room.

On Timar's face Timea saw a great change. His usually calm features glowed with excitement, and were beautified by passion. He went directly to the girl, who was embroidering the wedding-dress with golden roses and silver leaves.

"Miss Timea," said he, "I come to bid you farewell. May you be happy! May you remain long a child! Yet if there comes a time when you are unhappy, remember that there is a man who for you——"

He could not speak further; his voice failed him.

Timea supplied the half-uttered words—

"Three times!"

Timar pressed her hand, and stammered—

"For ever!"

Then he bowed, and went without disturbing the pair in the next room.

From his lips came no word invoking God's blessing on the house. He felt rather that God's curse ought to rest upon it.

The embroidery fell out of Timea's hand; she sighed, and repeated—

"Three times!" The gold thread slipped out of the eye of her needle.

As Timar hurried down the staircase, he passed the marble pillars which supported the entrance.

He struck them with his clenched fist in his rage. What if the people above had seen his act? Would they have

prayed that the roof might not fall in upon them? No, they would have laughed on at the child upon whom they were playing such a heartless trick, while she sat and sewed on the wedding-garment.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS TOO IS A JEST.

The fame of the new Baronet of Levetinczy was not only noised throughout Hungary, but had also spread to Vienna. "A goldmensch" he was there called, for whatever business he undertook proved to be a gold mine. Timar was masterful in his intuitions. He knew what enterprises would be likely to meet with favour from the Government, and these were well under way before any of his competitors dreamed of their inception. As soon as it came out that Timar had some fresh device in view, he was followed by a crowd of speculators, busy as a swarm of bees. Where the queen bee hums, there must be honey ready for the gathering. Another secret of Timar's success was that he neither cheated nor smuggled. A man who can always draw a clean five per cent on a million has fifty thousand toward a second, and is an honourable money-maker. Timar hazarded little, and yet made great profits. He had no temptation to defraud. Many a time he conducted prosperous transactions, involving enormous sums, for the benefit of the State. If these operations implied the ruin and destruction of his rivals, never mind; the State was greater than any of its subjects.

Suddenly he took it into his head to buy up all the vineyards of the Monastor. The Monastor is a high hill which the knowing ones call "The Sandbank." It would seem that only a moderate vintage could be grown there, and that the juice must be of a quality not fit for gentlemen's palates. Still Timar purchased ten acres, including the summit. It was a puzzle to everybody.

Herr Brasowitsch felt that he was on the track of glorious prey, and ran into Katschuka's office.

"Now, my son, show that you really have sworn faith to me. Admit that the Government means to build on the

Monastor. I know that you risk your position to betray the secret, but only tell me, and I promise that the terrors of the Inquisition shall not extract it from me. You see this scamp of a Timar is buying all the land he can lay hands on. Somebody has let him into the secret. No reason why he should have the fat morsel all to himself. Is it true, then, that a fort is to be built on the Monastor?" Lieutenant Katschuka allowed a very reluctant affirmative to be drawn from him, and added gratuitously, "The Secretary of War has decided to extend the fortifications of Komorn to that point."

Oh, what a gem of a secret that was! Brasowitsch already (in imagination) scooped in his thousands.

Only one thing more. It would be the greatest favour if he could see the maps and ground-plan, and he begged humbly for the privilege.

Katschuka granted this too.

Brasowitsch took the whole plan in at a glance. This miserable adventurer, Timar, had bought the exact spot on which the fortress was to stand.

"And the terms upon which the Government will buy?"

"Double the cost to the last buyer," he extracted from the holder of the precious secret, who committed a crime in imparting the information.

"Enough!" said Brasowitsch, kissing the future husband of his daughter. "The rest I can manage. Your hundred thousand dowry will lie on your table the morning of the wedding. Good-bye!"

But it was hardly enough, after all. It would have been well to have learned a little more. This something more Herr Katschuka would have vouchsafed, if it had been asked; but it was not asked, so it happened to the speculation very much as it does to the foolish fly that dashes into a window pane.

Katschuka wanted the promised money, but not at the risk of everything. If the gulden came, well and good; if not, just as well!

Athanas Brasowitsch hastened to New Szöny, to interview the owners of the vineyards. He bought right and left from everybody who would sell, and at everybody's own figures. To the unwilling ones he offered a triple advance. For whatever he paid, it would return to him at least double.

He resorted to every possible measure to raise funds. He disposed of his grain at a reduced price; he borrowed at high rates, and used all the trust-moneys in his care; he played high stakes; but the winnings were so sure this time! He had the advantage of Timar, for once; for *he* had bought low, and *his* profits would be correspondingly limited.

Timar had not lost discretion, however.

It was true that the Government intended great additions to its fortifications; it was only a question of when the work would be begun, and how long a time would be devoted to the undertaking. It was a cruel trap that Timar sprung upon his competitors—a cruel, cruel jest. Timar sent for his old pilot, Johann Fabula.

"Johann," he said, "you are growing pretty old, almost broken-down from your hard work and exposure. Is it not almost time to think of rest?"

"To be sure I have been racking my brains for some way in which I could leave the water and find business on dry land. My eyes are getting weak. I should be thankful, your excellency, if you could make a steward of me."

Johann had become hoarser than ever; his voice sounded very much like the old-fashioned prompter's whisper on the stage of a rustic theatre.

"I know something better for you, Johann; make yourself master of an express and carrier's business."

"That's good enough, but requires two things—wagons and horses, and a place to put them."

"Both can be provided easily enough. What I am thinking of is this. The owner wants to dispose of the old meadow up yonder, between the Danube and the Woeg. Go and buy it."

"I buy it? That is a joke; there is not a more barren spot in the country round. Nothing will grow there but poor camomile. I do not want to go into the drug business. Moreover, it would take a pile of money."

"Well, don't ruminate that way. Here are two thousand florins. Use them as a deposit. Bid on the land until it is yours, but do not let anyone else have an inch of it. What you have to pay further, I will lend you. Return it to me when you can; it is a matter of honour. I want no interest—no promise to pay, in writing—just give me your hand on it." Johann Fabula shook his head dubiously.

"I never can do anything with that ground. You will levy on my boots by-and-by for your money. I can't do it."

"Don't be afraid. I shall expect nothing the first year. After that we will see."

"I cannot turn horses into such a pasture. What shall I sow it with?"

"You will neither plough nor sow it, yet I promise you an abundant harvest. Now go, and keep your own counsel."

Although Fabula had always thought every movement and notion of Timar's, *à priori*, supremely ridiculous, yet he obeyed him implicitly.

The Secretary of War arranged that the improvements should be done very gradually, allowing from thirty to forty years, and the same number of millions in money, towards the final completion. It was decided, too, that only the ground upon which the new fort was to stand should be purchased now, and the rest as it was required. No need of investing in property that would not be used at present. This was the grim joke that Timar practised on all his enemies, including the maddest of them all, Athanas Brasowitsch, who, as soon as he bought, set everything in motion as if he intended to have a vast vineyard.

So the matter stood three days before Athalie's wedding day.

Two days before the wedding Johann Fabula fairly flew into Timar's office.

"Ten thousand! twenty thousand! forty thousand! Commission—pay—barren meadow—harvest!" These words leaped from his lips, without connection or apparent sense.

"All right, Johann; I know what you want to say. The commission has been examining the meadow, to put a valuation on it; what you paid twenty thousand gulden for, they have offered you double, and now you have a profit. Isn't that it?"

"Yes," gasped the poor fellow, no longer poor. "Twenty thousand gulden mine! I can't believe it! I shall go mad! Do let me turn a somersault!"

Timar did not object, and the old man turned three somersaults forward and as many back, before Timar could prevent his doing himself some possible damage.

"Now I am going to buy me a synagogue."

This was not a joke. The Komorn Jews had built them

a new house of worship, and wished to dispose of their former place of meeting. Fabula meant what he said. He secured the old synagogue for a reasonable sum, and obtained what had long been to him an object of great desire.

But before he made this purchase he visited Timar not less than six more times on that day. First, with his wife, who made her bow, and brought their benefactor a large fantastically shaped loaf of white bread; then the younger daughter came an hour later with a toothsome pappy cake; then the marriageable daughter appeared with a bridal plate filled with honey cake, nuts, and raisins, and decorated with fancy papers; then the boys one after another did obeisance, and showed their gratitude, one with a gaily painted bird cage, the work of his own hand, another opening his heart in a poetical effusion; and late at night the happy family gathered under Herr Levetinczy's window and sang lustily, in a hearty, grateful serenade, "O how happy is the man who to others doeth good!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE WEDDING-DRESS.

There were only three days before the wedding. On Sunday afternoon Athalie went to pay her last visits to her young lady friends, which, as custom permits, can be paid without the bride-elect's mother.

Mrs. Sophie therefore remained at home. She was delighted to do this, for it reminded her of her former Sunday holidays, when she was a chamber-maid, and could fill her apron with popped corn, and sit on a bench eating it, while gossiping with her fellow-servants.

She had the leisure day and the popped corn, but the company of her old associates was lacking. She had allowed her own cook and chamber-maid to go out, so that she could stay undisturbed in the kitchen; for popped corn is not to be eaten in the drawing-room because of the scattered particles.

Timea alone was with her. The embroidery of the wedding-dress was finished, and the stuff sent to the dress-maker, who was to have it ready for the day of the ceremony.

Timea sat beside Madame Sophie on a bench, and, looking timidly about to see if anybody was in hearing, she asked, "Mamma Sophie, what is the marriage-vow?"

Mrs. Sophie shook her head wisely, and looked sportively at the child; then, as if she were telling some fairy tale, she began, "Oh, you should once see a wedding!"

"Once I did listen at the church door," confessed the girl. "I stole in to watch the marriage, but all I saw was the bride and groom standing before a fine gold clothes-press on the wall."

"That was the altar!"

"Then a youngster came and drove me away, calling out, 'Be off with you, you heathen Turkish girl!' And I ran away."

"Well, you must know, the priest with a gold cap on his head, and a gold-embroidered mantle on his shoulders, has a book with gold clasps, and he chants out of this wonderfully. Then he asks the bride and groom if they love each other."

"And must they answer?"

"Of course. Each must say, 'Yes, I love;' and then the priest makes both swear to be true, and to love each other till death, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen! And the whole choir sings Amen after them!"

Timea trembled, half with fear, half with amazement.

"Then the priest takes two betrothal rings from a silver tray, and puts one on the finger of the bridegroom, and one on the finger of the bride, and puts their two hands together, and the organ peals, and the chorus all sing, Gospodi Pomilui! Gospodi Pomilui!"

O, how mysterious were these strange words to Timea! They must bring a blessing with them, these foreign words, she thought.

"Then the wedded pair stand under a silk-brocaded canopy, and two crowns are held over their heads. And all the time the choir keep singing Gospodi Pomilui. Then the priest crowns the bride with the silver crown, and says, 'I crown thee as the servant of God to be wife of this servant of God!'"

"O, how beautiful!"

"And then the deacon begins to pray, and the priest leads the bridal pair three times round the altar, and everybody says, 'What a lovely bride! What a handsome couple!'"

Timea's eyes sparkled at the charming story. It was a pity such a conversation should be interrupted, but just here the steps of a man were heard approaching, and somebody opened the door.

This somebody was Herr Katschuka.

Mrs. Sophie was at her wit's end. She had on old worn-out shoes, and her apron was full of parched corn. How could she hide herself?

Timea, who had nothing to hide, was equally startled.

"Excuse me," said the officer; "but as I found all the doors locked, I tried the kitchen."

"Yes; as Athalie is out paying visits, I let the servants go out too, and we two are all alone in the house. I beg the captain's pardon."

"O, make no apologies," said the officer; "I will stay with you in the kitchen."

Madame Sophie was greatly embarrassed. "I can't let you stay here," she cried. But the captain, like an experienced soldier, was master of the situation.

"Not a word," said he; "I'll sit on this covered water-bucket."

And he seated himself opposite Timea. The popped corn in her apron was a terrible mortification to Mrs. Sophie; but Herr Katschuka helped her out of this trouble—

"You have some popped corn there: won't you give me some?" he asked, helping himself as he spoke; and Mrs. Sophie was comforted.

"I was just talking to Timea," she said, "about the baptismal ceremony!"

Timea would have gone off in a hurry if Mrs. Sophie had told the truth, but this good lady was too experienced not to be able to turn the conversation when a new-comer unexpectedly appeared on the scene.

"I was telling her about the priest, and what she must do; and it frightened her. See how she trembles! I told her she would have to be dipped like a baby, and it scared her. Now don't be worried—it was only a joke. But she was most afraid that her hair would be disarranged by the baptism!"

A word in passing as to the style in which Timea's hair was dressed. She had wonderful hair—long and abundant—and Athalie took delight in inducing the girl to arrange it in the most absurd fashion. Timea wore her hair, as she did her gowns, in ridiculous and extravagant styles, at Athalie's suggestion; and neither curling-tongs, bandoline, brushing, nor pomades were spared in these peculiar processes. Timea did it all out of her love for Athalie, to please her, and had no idea how ill it became her ownself.

Herr Katschuka replied—"Miss Timea, never mind about your hair-dressing. You would look much better if you wore it simply. You have such beautiful hair that it is a sin to scorch it with hot irons, and daub it with pomades. You will ruin your hair by such ill-treatment. If you would only braid it plainly, and wind it round your head, you could not have a finer ornament than your lovely hair would be to you."

Very possibly Herr Katschuka said all this out of compassion for the poor, tortured hair, and had no other motive than to prevent Timea from following this ridiculous way of arranging her abundant tresses. But his words made a deeper impression than he himself imagined.

From this moment Timea felt as if the comb was a weight too great for her head, and she could hardly conquer her impatience to remove it till Herr Katschuka should go away.

The captain did not linger long. He took pity on Mrs. Sophie, who during his visit was absorbed in trying to keep her feet in her dilapidated shoes. The officer promised that he would call again during the day, and, kissing Mamma Sophie's hand, and bowing courteously to Timea, he departed.

Scarcely had his feet left the threshold, when Timea tore the tall comb out of her hair, undid all the puffs, and shook out her long locks. Then she ran to the water-bucket, and washed her hair clean from the pomatum.

"What are you doing, child?" cried Mrs. Sophie. "Why don't you leave your hair as it is? Athalie will be angry if she finds it undone when she comes home!"

"Let her be angry!" retorted Timea, as she wrung out her wet hair; and after a time began to plait it in three simple strands. Defiance had entered her spirit; she was no

longer afraid. The captain's words had roused resistance in her soul. His taste, his wishes, were her law.

She braided her hair, and wound it simply round her head, as he had suggested.

Mrs. Sophie laughed slyly. The childish maiden seemed to her to have gone crazy.

But the good woman drew closer to Timea, and tried to get into her good graces again.

"Let me tell you some more about the wedding ceremony. Where was I when that fool Katschuka interrupted us? Ah! if he had only known what we were talking about! Now, the bride and groom drink wine out of one glass. The choir and the deacon all the while sing 'Gospodi Pomilui!' and the priest reads the Gospels, while 'the best man' holds the crown over the heads of the married couple. Then the priest takes the crown, puts it on a silver plate, and says to the bridegroom, 'Be praised like Abraham, blessed like Isaac, and increase like Jacob!'

"Then he turns to the bride, and says, 'Be honoured like Sarah, love like Rebecca, and be fruitful like Rachel!'

"And after this blessing, the bride and groom kiss each other three times, before all the company and the altar."

Timea sat with downcast eyes in order not to see this sight.

When Athalie returned, she was astonished at Timea's re-arranged hair.

"Who told you that you might undo your hair? Where is the giraffe comb? Where are your cockades? Put them all back again!"

Timea shut her lips closely, and shook her head.

"Will you do as I say?"

"No!"

Athalie was amazed at this unusual resistance. It was an unheard-of thing for any one to dispute her will. And, most of all, strange for this charity child, who had always been subject to her, and who had once kissed her feet.

"You won't?" cried Athalie, approaching her, and putting her heated face close to Timea's pale one, as if she would burn her.

Mrs. Sophie looked on with great satisfaction.

"Didn't I tell you that you'd catch it when Athalie got home?"

But Timea looked straight into Athalie's flashing eyes and repeated, "No!"

"And why not?" shrieked Athalie; and now her voice sounded like her mother's, and her eyes looked like her father's.

"Because it looks prettier this way," replied Timea.

"Who told you so?"

"He."

Athalie's fingers curved like eagle's claws, and her white teeth glittered between her half-opened lips. She wanted to tear Timea into pieces. But suddenly she laughed outright. Her rage burst forth in this scornful laughter. She turned and went to her own room.

In the evening of this same day, Herr Katschuka returned to supper; and, during this meal, Athalie overwhelmed Timea with kindness.

"See, Herr Katschuka, how much prettier Timea is with her hair done in this way."

"That is true!" replied the captain.

Athalie laughed. It was no longer a jest, but a threat.

It was now only two days before the wedding. During these two days Athalie treated Timea with unusual attention. She would not allow her to go out among the servants, and whenever they entered the room, she made them kiss Timea's hand.

Mrs. Sophie called her always the little bride. And now the wedding-dress was brought home.

"Come," said Athalie, with suppressed laughter, "try on your gown."

The girl put on the beautiful garment, which she had embroidered with her own hands. She wore no corset, and her supple figure looked most graceful in her new dress. With what blushing and shy satisfaction she looked at herself in the mirror! Ah, how handsome she was going to be in her wedding-gown! How her heart beat, how her blood danced, and what mingled pleasure and pain thrilled her soul!

But she who played the wicked game with Timea thought nothing of all this emotion.

The maid who helped the victim put on the dress bit her lips to keep from laughing; and Athalie went on to adorn the child, who could not hide her joy. Athalie brought out the wed-

ding-garland, and put it on Timea's head. The myrtle and jasmine were very becoming. "How lovely you will be day after to-morrow!" said Athalie.

Timea took off the dress.

"I will try it on now," said Athalie, "and see how it fits me."

Athalie needed to tighten her corset, but nevertheless the dress was very becoming to her. She tried on the wreath; and Timea exclaimed in a tone of undisguised admiration—

"O, how beautiful you are! how beautiful you are!"

Ah! if only the jest now had been ended and explained!

But now Timea must drain the cup to the very dregs. She was so foolish, she must be punished. The whole day long they made sport of her. The poor child's head was quite turned. She trembled whenever Herr Katschuka's name was mentioned, and gave all sorts of irrelevant answers to the questions asked her. Everybody was amused at her expense.

Did Herr Katschuka have no idea of what was going on? Perhaps he had; perhaps not.

On the day before the wedding, Athalie said to the girl—

"You must fast to-day. To-morrow is a great day for you. First you must be baptized, and then married. So you must fast the day before, in order to be pure to approach the altar."

Timea obeyed, and ate not a mouthful the whole day long. And such a blooming maiden has a good appetite. Nature demands her rights. And on this day especially there were so many good things to eat! The servants coaxed her to take some food slyly, promising her that no one should be the wiser. But she would not yield to temptation: she went hungry. She helped make the tarts and jellies for the wedding banquet of the next day; all sorts of dainties were spread out before her, yet she did not taste any of them, while she saw that Athalie, who took part also in the preparations, ate any toothsome morsel she had a fancy for.

Timea went to bed early, for she said she was cold; and it was true. She trembled and shivered under the bed-clothes, and could not sleep.

When Athalie entered the room, and heard Timea's teeth

chattering, she was so cruel as to go and whisper in her ear, "To-morrow, at this time, where will you be?"

Poor child! How could she sleep, when in her girlish heart—a heart which at such an age is absorbed in dolls and toys—slumbering emotions had been awakened before their time. For long hours she could not rest. She tried to pray, but out of all her recent studies, in her excitement she could not remember the right prayer. Nobody had explained *that* to her. This was a part of the joke. She could think of nothing but the plagues of Egypt, in a doggerel rhyme which began with, "All the water was turned into blood," and ended with, "At last all the firstborn died."

And Athalie was so heartless as to laugh at the child's strange prayer; nor did she remember that, as it was the night before her own wedding, "Our Father" would have been a suitable prayer in which both she and Timea might have joined; for at such a time this would have been appropriate to a bride, however beautiful and rich she might be.

Timea at length, towards morning, fell asleep, and slept heavily. Her wearied nerves were quiet at last, and she did not wake even at the sound of the passing wagon wheels.

It was the wedding morning!

Athalie closed all the curtains in the bedroom, so that it was dark, and forbade the servants to wake Timea. The child was to be allowed to sleep till Athalie had put on her wedding apparel. And this took a long time. Athalie wished to appear to-day in the full splendour of her beauty.

On this day all the relatives and business acquaintances were to be present to celebrate the nuptials of the daughter of the rich Herr Brasowitsch.

All her nearest friends began to assemble in the house. Mrs. Sophie was squeezed into a new gown and (what was more unpleasant) into new shoes, which made her already wish that the day were well over.

The bridegroom appeared, cheerful and gallant as ever. But his expression was always so bright and his manners always so courteous that all this meant nothing. He brought the bridal bouquet. At that time camellias were not known, and so the bouquet was composed of roses of various colours. He said he brought roses to a rose. He had a beaming smile for his reward.

Two people were still lacking—Timea and Herr Braso-

witsch. Nobody took the trouble to ask for Timea, but everybody impatiently waited for Herr Brasowitsch.

He had gone out early to the fort to see the governor, and all the company were anxiously expecting his return. The bride went often to the window to see if the carriage had not yet arrived with her father in it. The bridegroom alone seemed undisturbed.

What could have detained Herr Brasowitsch? On the evening before, he had seemed in very good humour. He had been at the club with his friends, amusing himself, and had invited them all to the wedding. Late at night he had rapped at Herr Katschuka's window, and instead of calling out, "Good evening!" he had cried out, "The 100,000 gulden will be ready to-morrow!"

And this good humour was not ill-founded. The commandant of the fort had told him that the plan for the fortifications had been laid before the ministry in all its details, and the amount for the appropriations agreed upon. For those on the Island of Schutt, the sum had been ordered; the rest were already receipted for; and this night the contract, countersigned by the ministry, would be returned. It was just the same as if the money were in his pocket.

Herr Brasowitsch hardly waited the next morning for the regular office-hours. A little ahead of time he sent his name in to the governor, before others should present their claims.

The governor did not keep him waiting, but came out at once.

"A little fatality has occurred," said he, as he greeted Herr Brasowitsch.

"Never mind, if it isn't a great one."

"Have you ever heard anything of the State Council?"

"No, never!"

"Nor I either. For fifteen years I have never heard it mentioned; but to the despair of everybody it exists, and has just given signs of life. As I said, the Ministerial Council had accepted the plan of the whole fortifications, and had approved the appropriations. From some unknown source a report was made which offered great advantages to the State. The Ministerial Council could not be compromised. So the State Council was called in, of whom nobody had heard for fifteen years past, except that the members of it drew their regular annual salary. The question to be dis-

cussed was brought before it. And it was decided that the plan of the fortifications should be allowed to stand, but with some modifications as to its execution. The ground for the fortifications on the Island of Schutt should be accepted, but that on the Monastor only when the first section of the fort should be built; that is to say, eighteen or twenty years later. So the owner of this property must wait till that time to be paid. Good morning, Herr Brasowitsch!"

Herr Brasowitsch could not utter a word in reply. Was it possible that after every official had been seen, there was still a State Council in existence, and that when it was for the interest of everybody to open a vein to bleed the State, there should be found some one, contrary to his own interest, to protest against such a policy?

But there was no help for it. The expected 100,000 gulden had vanished, and with these also the second 100,000, which had been invested foolishly in the fallow vineyard. This money sunk in something which was now of no value. And, as this scheme ended in smoke, Herr Brasowitsch saw all his castles in the air fade with it. The fine house, the ships on the Danube, the church full of wedding-guests, all, all a baseless vision which, together with the hoped-for fortress, needed only a breath of wind or a ray of light to dissolve it for ever.

It seemed to the hapless man, as he came out, as if the sentinel on duty had two hats on his head, two muskets in his hand; as if the windows were dancing in the pavilion; as if the street rose up like a steep mountain before him, and all the walls were falling upon him!

* * * * *

Ah, yonder comes Timea! At last she had wakened. In the obscurity of the darkened room she looked about her feverishly, put on her clothing, and, as she found no one in the adjoining apartment, went forward into the chamber where Athalie was already dressing.

As she saw all the rooms decorated with flowers, she suddenly remembered that it was her wedding-day. And as she met Herr Katschuka with the nuptial bouquet, she knew also that he was her bridegroom. But as she looked at Athalie, she saw that *she* had on the wedding-dress which was to have been her own. Timea stared wildly around, and



in her look, as in her trembling mouth, there was an expression which seemed akin to weeping.

The servants and guests all looked on her with half-concealed smiles; and Athalie, with the haughtiness of a queen, went up to Timea, and patting her on the cheek with her white-gloved hand, said—

“Now, little one, to-day I am the one to be married, and you can go to school and wait five years till it is your turn, and then we will find a husband for you—if anybody will take you!”

Athalie felt slightly as if her beauty had not been enhanced by this rude jest, which ought to have been somewhat softened and toned down.

“Come, Timea,” she added, “I have been waiting for you to arrange my veil. Come, pin it on my head!”

The bridal veil!

Timea with rigid fingers took the veil and approached Athalie. It was to be fastened with a golden arrow on the bride's braids of hair. Timea's hand trembled, and the arrow was an awkward thing in itself. It would not easily go through the hair. By an impatient movement Athalie made Timea's hand slip, so that the dull point of the arrow scratched the lovely bride on the head.

“O, you awkward creature!” cried Athalie angrily, and she struck Timea's hand with violence.

Timea frowned. To be scolded and struck on this day and in the presence of that man! Two tear-drops gathered in her eyes, and rolled slowly down her pale cheeks.

Athalie, in her excitement, wished to make her irritation felt. In the hours just preceding the wedding ceremony, a bride may be permitted to be capricious.

The bridesmaids and groomsmen were all assembled, but the father of the bride still was absent.

Everybody was restless and uneasy; only the bridegroom retained his self-possession. Now came a message from the church that the priest was ready and waiting to perform the ceremony. The wedding chimes had been rung, as is the custom for the nuptials of distinguished people. Athalie's heart beat violently with wonder at the delay of her father. They sent a messenger to the fort to see what had become of Herr Brasowitsch.

At length they see from the window the landau coming.

Here he is at last. The bride goes to the mirror to see whether the folds of her veil are all right. She clasps her bracelets and settles the pearl necklace into its place on her Juno-like neck.

In the meantime there is a noise on the staircase as if many men were coming up in a crowd together. Excited voices were heard in the passages, and a cry of horror which was stifled before it became loud, and a tumult and confusion as if people were restlessly moving about.

The bridesmaids and friends rushed out of Athalie's room to see what was going on without; but strangely enough nobody returned to bring any intelligence. Athalie heard her mother shriek; but she shrieked so often, even when she tried to speak low!

"Go and see what has happened!" cried Athalie to her bridegroom.

The captain went out. The bride remained alone in her room with Timea.

The mysterious and stifled noises without made Athalie more and more anxious.

Her bridegroom came back. He stood on the threshold of the door and said—

"Herr Brasowitsch is dead!"

The bride flung her hands wildly up into the air, and staggered back unconscious. If Timea had not caught her, she would have fallen headlong on the marble floor.

The face of the beautiful proud bride was paler than that of Timea. And Timea, as she held Athalie's head in her arms, thought—

"How this wedding-dress lies in the dust!"

But the bridegroom remained standing in the doorway, and looked steadily in Timea's eyes; then turned and left the house in the midst of the wild confusion. He had not even lifted his bride from the ground!

CHAPTER VIII.

TIMEA.

See how the wedding-dress lies in the dust! Instead of the marriage feast, there were the funeral baked meats. The bridal robes were succeeded by the mourning garments. Athalie and Timea put on similar apparel—the sombre colour that makes rich and poor alike—inky black; as if mourning and sorrow consisted only in the wearing of black attire! Still, with the sudden death of Athanas Brasowitsch, the whole house was decked with dark apparel, as when, on the eve of a winter storm, black crows take possession of an entire roof. The first croaking and groaning of the ravens was heard when the bridegroom coolly returned the wedding-ring. He never so much as appeared at the funeral service to offer to his half-fainting bride an arm, as she followed the coffin to the cemetery. This act was the more significant because it was the custom, in this little town, for mourners, whether lords or servants, to accompany the dead to the grave on foot and with uncovered head.

Meanwhile, the ravens gathered thicker and faster on the house of Brasowitsch. Creditors demanded their loans back. And thereupon the card house went to pieces. The legal proceedings of the first creditor ruined the establishment. The avalanche, once set in motion, never stopped till it was landed at the foot of the precipitous path. Just what the prospective bridegroom feared came to light. In other words, the business of Brasowitsch was in a very critical, complicated state. Apparently successful undertakings were so mixed with short accounts, damaging investments, imaginary profits, and the like, that the inventory revealed a very large surplus of liabilities; and, furthermore, innumerable trust funds,

belonging to widows, orphans, and various charitable organisations, were not to be found at all. After the avalanche, came a flood : a flood full of slime and mire—full of disgrace and infamy. Timea, too, lost her little all. The money intrusted to her guardian could be found in no record as having been invested. Then, daily, there came lawyers, officers of the court, and sheriffs. Every article in the house had an injunction placed upon it—from the homely spindle to the most elegant furniture. Everything was sealed. Nor were the ladies asked if a visit would be discommoding. But at any hour of the day, men were seen running back and forth through all the rooms of the dwelling, scolding over the crooked ways of the deceased, and cursing him in the presence of the mourning women. One after another the valuable things disappeared. With laudable discrimination the pictures were taken, with or without frames, and the lovely bridal dresses, without the bride. And then the day was appointed when all that remained must go under the hammer. The announcement was in fact nailed over the doorway. The auction included the house ; and as soon as it should be sold, the present inmates could look where it pleased them for new quarters. The beautiful Athalie might implore heaven for guidance to a place where to lay her head. What is there left for the orphan of a bankrupt swindler, who has bequeathed his child nothing, not even a good name, and for whom there is not a single well-wisher in all the wide world ?

Of the multitudes of her father's treasures she was able to retain but two articles of value—a small chalcedony box, and the returned engagement ring. The little box she concealed in her pocket, and at night, when quite alone, she drew it forth for examination. It contained a collection of all kinds of poisons, which, during her Italian journey, she had in a capricious mood purchased, without anyone's knowledge, to serve some purpose. Crossed in the slightest way, she played the tyrant with her parents and her lover, by threatening to take one of the numerous deadly poisons. Now, and here, was her hour of test. Before her was a life of hopelessness, in all its comfortless barrenness. Her father had made his child a beggar, and her lover had forsaken her. Athalie, rising in bed, contemplated the contents of the box, and from the varieties of the poisons

undertook to select the one most suitable. In this act she revealed herself to herself. She was afraid to die. In her inmost heart she knew that she had not the courage to face death. She looked at her face thoughtfully in the mirror. How beautiful she was! She lacked the boldness to destroy so much beauty. She locked the casket and hid it again. Then she brought out her second treasure—the ring. This, too, contained poison, but far more deadly!—a poison fatal to the soul. Yet this she quaffs exultingly—draining the draught to the dregs. She turned about for her clothes. There was no maid now to assist her in dressing. The domestics had left in a body. Mrs. Sophie and Timea occupied the servants' apartment. The seal of the court had closed the spacious sitting-rooms. Athalie wakened neither of the sleepers, but quietly dressed herself. How far into the night was it? She could not tell; no clock had been wound since the creditors claimed them all. Indifferent to the hour, Athalie sought for the latch-key, and softly stole out, leaving open every door behind her. And then she wended her way down the dark street. Only one or two little lamps glimmered in the distance—one in front of the town-house; another, faint and flickering, over the guard-house; all else was the blackness of darkness. Athalie hastened toward the "Anglia." Between the fortress and the city there was a meadow, where, during the night, homeless unfortunates, with painted cheeks and dishevelled hair, roamed about, after the police had frightened them from their haunts in the market-place. Athalie would be sure to meet some of these wanderers in her walk. The prospect did not shock her now.

The poison, sucked from the innocent-looking circlet, rendered her fearless, and insensible to any danger in meeting these impure creatures. One never dreads the mire until one has once stepped into it.

At the corner of the "Anglia" stood a military sentinel. His attention must not be aroused, for how could she reply to "Who's there?" The corner house had a colonnade. During the day, women sat beneath it selling bread. To this shelter Athalie hastened. In her haste she stumbled over something. A woman in rags lay across the passage in a drunken sleep. The disturbed creature accosted her with ugly maledictions, but Athalie stepped over her and passed on. There was a load of anxiety off her heart, when

she turned the corner at the "Anglia," out of sight of the watchman, and found herself in the shadow of the trees. Through the branches she discovered a light; it was the captain's residence.

Athalie took hold of the lion-headed knocker outside the door. Her hand trembled a moment before she ventured two or three dull strokes. Finally, she succeeded, and the officer's valet appeared and opened to her. "Is the captain at home?" she asked.

The scamp winked smirkingly that he was within. He had often seen Athalie; his palm had frequently been warmed by a groschen from her little hand, when he had brought her flowers, or the first fruits of the season, from his master.

The captain was still at work. He had a modestly furnished room entirely wanting in luxury. The walls were hung with maps and geometrical instruments. A bare soldier-like simplicity surprised the visitor. The furniture, the books, and even the very boards were permeated with tobacco smoke. Athalie had never seen this room before. The home to which the bridegroom was to lead her after her wedding had very different appointments, but that was confiscated by the creditors on the fatal day.

She had only looked into this room occasionally, through the window from the other side of the promenade, when, in company with her mother, they were enjoying the afternoon park concert.

Captain Katschuka was startled. He had not expected any lady visitor. Against all military regulations he had left unfastened the three upper buttons of his violet-coloured uniform. He had even relieved himself of his cravat.

Athalie remained standing on the threshold, with her arms hanging and her head bowed.

The captain hastened toward her.

"For heaven's sake, Fraülein, what is the matter? How came you here?"

Athalie made no attempt to answer, but she threw herself on his breast and sobbed.

The captain did not embrace her.

"Be seated, pray," he said, leading Athalie to a sofa. His first care was to restore the missing cravat, and to button his coat up to the neck. He then took a chair, and seated

himself opposite his visitor, but at a little distance from her.

"What are you doing here, Fraülein?"

Athalie dried her tears, and looked long and earnestly into his face, as if she wished to make clear to him, through the medium of her shining, sparkling eyes, why she was there. Would he not understand it?

No, he understood nothing.

And then, when she was compelled to speak, such a sudden quaking took possession of her that it was difficult for him to distinguish the groans from the words.

"While I was fortunate and happy," she said, "you were very kind to me. Is there nothing of this goodness yet left?"

"Certainly, my Fraülein," replied Katschuka, with cool formality, "I shall always respect you and remain your friend. The misfortune which overtook *you* affects *me* as well as yourself, for we both have lost everything. I, too, am in despair, for I know of no expedient that will again revive my hopes, now turned to ashes. My career, from which I expected success, requires such hard conditions that I scarcely can fulfil them. We poor fellows must not marry."

"I know," said Athalie; "I did not mean to remind you of that. We are now very poor; but our lot may take a turn for the better. My father left a wealthy uncle in Belgrade, whose heirs we are. We shall be rich again by and by. Till then I will wait patiently for you. Will you wait for me too? Take back your betrothal ring. Please take me to your mother, and leave me with her as your affianced bride. I will bide my time. I will prove, meanwhile, a respectful and obedient daughter to your mother."

The captain gave a sigh so deep that it almost extinguished the lamp. He took in his hand the ring she had put upon the table.

"Hm! Fraülein, that is impossible. You do not know my mother. She is a very ambitious woman—an unsociable being. She lives in a small boarding-house, and loves nobody. You cannot conceive how many quarrels I have had with her in consequence of my love-affairs. She is a born baroness, and never gave her consent to my engagement. She would not even come to our wedding. I could not take you to her. I have, on your account, defied my mother."

Athalie's bosom heaved feverishly. Her cheeks glowed. She caught with her two hands her faithless lover's left, from which the engagement ring had been taken off, and whispered to him (that the walls might not hear, and that the books should not carry the tale)—

"If you have defied your mother for my sake, I would defy the whole world for yours!"

Poor girl!

Herr Katschuka did not look into the eyes of the beautiful woman before him, but with his free hand drew geometrical figures on the table with the ring, as if he hoped to deduce from the sine and cosine the difference between lunacy and love.

The girl continued—

"I have already been so humiliated that no shame could mortify me further. I have on earth nothing more to lose but you. I would have killed myself, but for you. Decide and command what I shall be to you. I am losing my senses, and care for nought. Make way with me, if you will, and I'll not flinch!"

Will his mathematical study furnish him an answer to these passionate words?

"Miss Athalie, I shall give you some candid advice. You know that I am an honourable man."

(She had not asked him for advice.)

"As your good friend, I give you this counsel. You say you have an uncle in Belgrade. Go to him. He is your nearest relative by blood, and he will receive you kindly. I give you my word as a gentleman that I shall not marry, and should we meet again, I will cherish the feeling that I now have, and have had for years."

Katschuka was not guilty of falsehood when he made this promise.

But in that moment Athalie detected in his face what his words failed to convey: that now and for years past he had no special love for her; that he was interested in another; and if that other had been brought to the same abject poverty as herself, he might with reason give his word of honour that he would remain single. This she saw in the face of her former lover, and her eyes fairly blazed. She asked finally—

"Will you come for me to-morrow, and escort me as far as Belgrade, to my uncle?"

Herr Katschuka hastened to reply—

"I will come. But now you must go home. Did some one conduct you to my house?"

"I came alone."

"What temerity! Who will go back with you?"

"You cannot do it," replied she, bitterly. "Should any one see us together at this house what a scandal it would be. Reproach upon *you*. I have nothing to fear. What have I now that can be taken from me?"

"My servant will follow you."

"He shall not do so. The patrol might seize the poor fellow for being out after the tattoo. I shall find my way well enough alone. Well, to-morrow then."

"I will be there to-morrow, at eight."

Athalie threw her black mantle around her, and escaped before the captain could open the door for her. It seemed to her that he had turned aside to buckle on his sword, perhaps to keep her in view at a distance; so she slipped away. At the corner of the "Anglia" she stopped and looked round. Nobody followed her. She then hurried homeward in the darkness.

On her way she contrived a plan. If she once more had the captain at her side—if he went with her as far as Belgrade—no power under heaven should free him from her.

She stumbled a second time over the human bundle in rags. No more curses now. It was the deep sleep of misery, and not easily disturbed. As Athalie approached the door of her house, a sudden thought flashed through her inflamed brain. Had the captain promised to escort her to Belgrade so willingly, only to get rid of her? What if he should not come to-morrow at eight, nor ever again!

The black bats of such presentiments whirled about her head as she groped up the dark stairway.

"How will it be if he does not come?"

A painful fear excited her nerves. She fumbled about for a match; her hand clasped instead a knife—a sharp kitchen knife, with a bone handle. She clutched the instrument, and walked the length of the room in the darkness.

Her teeth chattered.

This thought went through her brain—If she should bury this blade in the heart of that girl with the pale face, sleeping in the next room, both would be provided for. One

lunge there where the white form lay on the spotless pillow—and all would be over. Athalie came to her senses only when she entered her own sleeping-room, and started towards Timea. Then she recollected that her foster-sister and mother lay together in the servants' room.

The knife fell from Athalie's hand, and she quivered through her whole frame. For the first time she realised her loneliness. How dark it was around her, and how gloomy within her soul! She threw herself on the bed in her clothes, and tried to pray. Instead of a prayer, there came into her mind the words of the Egyptian plague, which the child had repeated in fright on the evening before that fatal day—"Rivers of blood—locusts—hail—murrain of beasts—thick darkness in all the land—the firstborn were slain."

When she closed her eyes, these images forced themselves upon her; and when stupefying sleep possessed her, these self-same pictures thronged her dreams—"Rivers of blood—grievous locusts—thunder and hail—boils and blains—darkness which may be felt—slaughter of the firstborn."

Out of this unrestful and exhausting sleep, Athalie was awakened by the beat of a drum. It was the signal for the auction-sale. Oh, how doleful were the sounds! To hear the things, the familiar things, which have become part of your life, and only yesterday were your own, offered to the rabble with the cry, "What do I hear?" "Who bids?" "Shall I have any more?"

The drum rolls, and the hammer falls. Piece after piece went in this way. Athalie picked up the few garments which had been left her—and which consisted of her mourning apparel—and went to find somebody. There was no one left to seek but her mother and Timea, and these two were in the kitchen.

Mrs. Sophie looked as huge as a hogshead. Knowing that the law would not interfere with what might be on her person, she kept from the hammer some eight or nine dresses, with the pockets filled with napkins and silver. She could scarcely move.

Timea had on a plain every-day dress. Upon the hearth bubbled the milk and coffee for breakfast.

When Mrs. Sophie discovered Athalie, she broke out into loud lamentation, and fell on her neck.

"Oh, my sweet, lovely, beautiful daughter, what will become

of us! Would we had never lived to see this day! You were wakened by that horrible drum, were you not, dear?"

"Is it eight o'clock yet?" asked Athalie.

"Why, to be sure; the auction was to be at nine. Do you not hear it?"

"Has anybody asked for us?"

"Who would be looking for us at such a time!"

Athalie seated herself wearily upon the kitchen bench.

Timea got ready the breakfast for the two ladies, laid the table, and toasted the bread. Athalie paid no heed when her mother earnestly entreated her, saying to her sorrowful daughter—

"Do drink, my dear, sweet, only child! Who knows where we shall get our coffee to-morrow! Everybody is our enemy—everyone who knows us reviles and abuses us. What will become of us? what will become of us?"

In spite of this outburst of feeling, she could drink her coffee, and eat a goodly proportion of the toast prepared by Timea.

Failing to make any impression on Athalie, who sat with her head in her hands, Mrs. Sophie quieted herself by thus venting her spleen on Timea:

"The ungrateful minx! She takes our troubles very lightly. It makes no difference to her. She can easily go to service. Yes; she is actually rejoicing over the prospect that she can earn her own bread, and have her freedom to follow her own sweet will. Oh, only wait! you will think of us yet! you will live to repent! We'll see!"

Since Timea had done nothing seriously objectionable, no reason for her repentance was apparent to her mind.

"But what will become of *you*, beautiful child? Who will protect you, and spare your delicate, white hands?"

"Go, and leave me in peace," said Athalie, pushing her mother from her neck. "Do go to the window, and see if some one is not coming?"

"Nobody, nobody! Who is there to come now?"

Meanwhile time was flying; and the beat of the drum, and the cry of the auctioneer, were heard alternately. At every stroke, Athalie started up in fright, and on recollecting the disturbing cause, leaned her head on her hand and gazed again into vacancy. The rich ruby of her cheeks and lips had turned blue; her staring eyes were encircled with rings;

her woe-begone face and wrinkled brow distorted her beauty; she sat like a fallen angel, driven from Paradise into the wilderness.

Already it was noon, and he for whom she waited so patiently came not. But the chaffering cries of the sale came nearer and nearer. Mrs. Sophie, despite her despair, gave attention enough to notice how quickly the goods were bought in. It seemed but a moment between the announcement and the fall of the hammer. There were groups of bidders talking among themselves, and the expressions, "This fellow is evidently a fool!" "No chance for anybody else here!" could be distinctly heard. Everything was sold out but the kitchen appurtenances, yet no effort was made to intrude upon the privacy of these three women. They heard the question, "How much am I offered for the kitchen appointments unseen?" and at once an answer that announced the auction closed. Singularly enough the buyers carried away nothing, but all proceeded to the courtyard and pressed forward to the auctioneer's block. At the signal for silence a low voice was heard making an offer. Amongst the crowd there was confusion, abusive language, and finally a shout of laughter. And the auctioneer cried, "For the first; for the second; for the third! Will anyone bid higher?" The drum rolled for the last time. The house had found a buyer too.

Athalie still sat unmoved on the wooden bench, hoping against hope. Nevertheless, a faint ray gleamed through the Egyptian darkness. Perhaps the captain was ashamed to be seen pushing through the crowd. Possibly he was waiting till the court was cleared of the rabble. He might come after all.

"Do you not hear some one coming, mother?"

"I hear nothing, my dear child."

"Why, I believe some one is coming nearer on tiptoe."

In fact they all heard a hesitating step in the outer hall. Presently there was a pause at the kitchen door, followed by the gentle, polite rap of a visitor who feels that he may be intruding, and who humbly begs permission to enter.

Upon Madame Sophie's "Come in!" the door opened, and, hat in hand, respectfully bowing, there stood Michael Timar, Baronet of Levetinczy.

Athalie gazed at him with an expression of disappointment, mingled with hatred. Mrs. Sophie glanced shyly at him with



a wavering hope. Timea alone gave him a quiet, mild look, full in the eyes.

"I came to explain," began Timar, "that I have bought this house and everything it contains. Not for myself, but to give it to the one who alone in this house is not purchasable, yet to me the only treasure in the world. Miss Timea, from to-day you are the mistress of this house and all belonging to it. I need not enumerate. Nothing has been touched. The creditors of the firm of Brasowitsch & Co. are satisfied, and I herewith pass over to you everything. And should there be anywhere in this house a tiny corner where a quiet fellow like myself could find room, who could only inconvenience you by his admiration and respect, please let me fill that little nook. And were there also a place for me in your heart, if you would not reject my hand, I would be eternally happy. The goal of my ambition and the aim of my life would be to love and serve you always."

In Timea's face there shone, at these words, a strange, maidenly radiance. Indescribable pain, a girlish blush, noble gratitude, a readiness for this holy sacrifice, all united to give a heavenly expression to her countenance.

"Three times!" . . . "three times!" lisped her lips.

This man had been her saviour so often; he was always so kind to her; never ridiculed nor flattered her; and now he gave her everything that heart could wish. Timar waited quietly after he had spoken. Timea was silent a long time.

"Do not be hasty with your answer. I am willing to wait until you decide. I can come again to-morrow or next week. You will remain mistress here all the same. Everything is in your name now. I attached no condition to this transfer. If you prefer not to see me again, say the word, and your wish shall be respected. Please take all the time you desire for deliberation—a week, a month, or a year. I have only to wait."

Timea now stepped forward from behind the hearth, where the others had pushed her on Timar's entrance, and approached him with an air of decision, which gave her a womanly dignity and grace far beyond her years. She had ceased to be a child upon that portentous wedding day. Looking Timar quietly in the eye, she said—

"I have considered it." And reaching him her hand, she softly added, "I accept, and will obey you as your wife."

Timar took the offered hand, not with the fervour of a young lover, but with manly homage. He returned her gaze. She permitted him to look into her soul for the moment, then she repeated the words, "I shall follow and obey you, and be to you your faithful submissive wife; only I have one favour to ask. I beg you earnestly, do not deny it me."

Timar forgot in his joy everything else.

"O speak! what you may desire is already fulfilled."

"I beseech you," continued Timea, "if you accept me as your wedded wife, and this is to be our house, and I its mistress, that you permit my foster-mother, who took me, an orphan, and educated me till now, and my adopted sister, with whom I have grown up, to remain with me; consider them as my own mother and sister, and treat them well always."

Involuntarily the tears started into Timar's eyes.

Timea noticed the tell-tale tears, caught his hand in both of hers, and took by storm his surprised heart.

"You will do what I have asked, will you not? And you will give back to Athalie everything that belongs to her, her jewels and her dresses; and she will live with us, and you will be as kind to her as if she were my own sweet sister. And you will say Mamma Sophie too, will you not?"

Mrs. Sophie began at these words to cry out loud, and, falling on her knees before Timea, would not allow herself to be prevented from kissing her dress, her knees, and her very feet—at the same time sending forth the most mysterious, unintelligible shrieks.

Timar dried his tears, and the next moment he was controlled again by his sober sense; that far-seeing, reserved, cautious instinct for affairs that had hitherto guided him in all critical situations, and given him the advantage over his fellow beings. In the twinkling of an eye he comprehended the future condition of things thoroughly. Taking both of Timea's hands in his, he replied—

"You are noble-hearted, Timea. (Please allow me to leave off the Miss.) I will not be put to shame by you. Rise Mamma Sophie; ask Athalie to come nearer to us. I will do even more than Timea wishes for you and for her. It shall not be a place of shelter, but I will furnish a good home for Athalie. I will make the first payment to the

bridegroom, and I will give also what her late father promised as her dower. May you be very happy !”

Timar felt in his heart that no sacrifice would be too great to rid Timea and his home of these two, to him, objectionable women.

The chivalrous captain, he reasoned further, would marry Athalie under the new arrangement.

Now it was his turn to be the recipient of Mrs. Sophie's grateful kisses and embraces. From the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, hardly a spot escaped her osculatory salute. Then she took both Timar and Timea in her capacious arms, and pronounced upon them her devoutest blessing. It was impossible not to laugh over the poor old woman's expressions of joy.

But Athalie spoiled the pleasure of all. Haughty as a fallen angel, preferring perdition rather than that her pride should yield one iota, she said, in a voice almost choked with excitement—

“Thank you very much ! I require nothing further of Capt. Katschuka, either in this life or the next. I shall never be his wife. I prefer to remain here with Timea, as her maid.”



BOOK III

NO MAN'S LAND.

CHAPTER I

THE MARRIAGE OF THE MARBLE STATUE.

Timar was overjoyed when he was betrothed to Timea.

The beauty of the girl had enthralled him at their first meeting. He adored her. Her mild disposition, which he had learned to know later, had won his esteem. The cruel jest which he had seen played upon her had roused his chivalry of spirit. The mock courtship made to her by the handsome lieutenant had excited his jealousy. All these emotions belonged to love. Now at last he had gained his dearest wish. The lovely maiden was his; she was to be his wife.

And his spirit escaped from a heavy burden of self-reproach. For from the day when Timar had discovered the treasure of Ali Tschorbadshi in the sunken ship, he had lost his peace of mind. When his undertakings had been most successful, an inward voice had been his accuser—"All this is not yours. It is the property of an orphan girl, and you have misappropriated it. Are you a lucky man? No. Are you a benefactor of the poor? No. You are a thief!"

But now all this is over. The secret judge has pronounced a verdict of acquittal. The orphan who has been robbed regains her inheritance. She receives it even doubled. For what belongs to her husband is hers as well. She will never know that the foundation of this great fortune was hers by right. She will only know that from this time henceforward the fortune is hers. And so all is expiated. Or if not expiated, at least it will be settled satisfactorily.

But Timar did not reflect that, in giving back the treasure, he had imposed upon it also the burden and addition of himself; that he had demanded a gift in exchange, the heart of the maiden; and that such a proceeding was a cheat and an outrage.

Timar was eager to hasten the wedding. There were no obstacles on his part. He did not need to delay for the marriage trousseau; he bought a great deal in Vienna for his bride, and employed the best dressmakers from Paris to prepare her wardrobe. The bride did not need to sew it for six weeks herself, as on the former occasion. That other luckless wedding-dress was laid aside, hidden away in a drawer, where nobody could see it. No one would ever bring it out again.

But there were other important obstacles in the way. Timea was not yet baptized. It was natural that Timar should wish his bride, on her conversion from Mohammedanism, should be a Protestant, and of his own sect, so that they could go to the same church.

Therefore the Protestant clergyman came to her to say that it was indispensable to her change of faith for the neophyte to understand the doctrines of the Church which she was about to enter. And as it is not enough for a Protestant, as it is in the Greek Church, merely to see and hear, since Protestantism appeals to the reason, the girl must be instructed in the new creed, so that she could understand how much wiser and more natural are the doctrines which she was to accept than those which she had hitherto held as sacred.

It is not a bad thing that Mohammedanism has no creed for women. They do not even need to be present at Divine service, for they are not troubled with souls, and therefore have nothing to hope for in heaven, nor to be afraid of in hell. The Mohammedan woman is nothing more than a flower that blooms and fades. Her spirit is like the fragrance of a blossom, which the wind carries with it, and which—thus blown about—at last wastes away.

The reverend gentleman had a pretty hard task when he undertook to convert Timea to his rational religion. He had converted Jews and Papists enough, but this was his first experience with a Turkish girl. When he had explained to Timea that in the glorious world above, those who had loved

and been united to each other in this world would again meet and belong to each other eternally, the girl asked him—

“Will a person in that other world belong to the one whom he or she *loved*, or to the one he or she had *married* here?”

This was a startling question, but the clergyman replied, after a little reflection, “that as it was impossible for one to love another to whom the priest had not united him or her, and as it was impossible for one to love anybody except the person to whom he or she had been united by the priest, the promise was all correct.” But the minister did not tell Timar about the question which the Turkish woman had asked.

At another time Timea inquired—“When her father, Ali Tschorbadschi, came to that other world, would he be in the same place with her?” The clergyman had no very satisfactory answer to give her.

“Shall I not be Herr Levetinczy’s wife there?” asked Timea.

To this the preacher replied piously, that no doubt she would be.

“Then I shall ask my husband to make a little room for my father by us, and I am sure he won’t refuse me.”

The clergyman scratched his head, and said these questions would have to be settled by a synod.

The third day after such wise instructions, the priest told Timar that the girl was now prepared to be baptized and married. If she needed further religious training, her husband could attend to it. The ceremonies took place on the following Sunday, and Timea for the first time attended a Protestant church.

This simple building, with its white-washed walls and its undecorated chancel, made a very different impression upon her from that of the Greek church, out of which the children had driven her when she tried to peep in. There she had seen a gilded altar, great wax tapers in silver candlesticks, and walls full of pictures: there incense had floated, and mysterious music had thrilled her; and at the sound of a bell the people had dropped on their knees. All these things had been enchanting and exciting to her imagination. But in this place, men sat alone on long benches on one side, and women on the other, each person holding a book; and when

the choristers began, all the assembly sang the whole psalter through. Then when they stopped, the pastor rose in the pulpit and began to talk without any ceremonies—he didn't sing: he didn't taste anything, and he didn't hold up anything to see: he only kept talking, and Timea did not understand a word he said. She stared in amazement at the benches full of women, who sat there two hours without once opening their lips, even to whisper to their next neighbour. What a frightful religion! To keep such a lot of women dumb so long! The minister might at least give them a chance to say Amen when the sermon ended.

Timea sat in the first row of benches near the pulpit, by the side of the wife of the chief of the trustees. This matron, who was to be her godmother, accompanied her to the baptismal font. The chief trustee himself was her godfather.

The ceremonies were simple. The reverend preacher said a long lot of words by the font, and then all of a sudden stopped. The neophyte bowed her head, and the physician of souls baptized her Susanna, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; for her godmother had chosen this name. Then the dean held forth in a long speech about her new duties, and her godmother took her back to the bench. All the men got up and prayed—only they prayed silently, while the priest prayed aloud.

During all this time Timea sat wondering why they had changed her name to Susanna, since she had always been satisfied with her former one. After the praying was over, the preacher read Psalm lxxxiii., beginning, "O thou God of Israel;" and Timea wondered whether they had baptized her into a Jewess!

But she soon forgot this fear, as a younger man rose in the pulpit and read from a paper that the noble, gracious, and distinguished Herr Michael Timar von Levetinczy, of the Helvetian Church, had betrothed as wife the orphan daughter of the noble, highborn, and worthy Ali Tschorbadtschi, Susanna Timea, now a member of the Helvetian Church.

And the three legions of women never said a word—not even Amen.

Timea began to grow a little calmer during all this business.

After this publication of banns, there must be a delay of

two weeks before the wedding; and during this time Timar visited Timea daily. She received him always with sincere cordiality, and Timar was happy in his anticipations for the future.

Whenever he came to see Timea, if Athalie were present *she* found some pretext for leaving the room, and Mrs. Sophie came back in her stead. Mrs. Sophie entertained Timar with praises of the girl who was to be his bride, and told him how she had explained to Timea how much she owed to Timar; how he had saved her from shipwreck, and from Turkish prisons, and had risked his life in bravely trying to rescue her property from the sunken Saint Barbara; how he had taken care of her in her illness on shipboard, and how without him she would have died; how he had found out a place of refuge for her on the unknown island, and many other details, which Timar knew Mrs. Sophie must have learned from Timea herself; and he was pleased to find that the girl had remembered these particulars. He thought that her recital of the events of the past proved that Timea loved him.

"O, if you only knew, dear Levetinczy, how the maiden loves you!" cried Mrs. Sophie.

And Timea listened without embarrassment. She was modest, serious, and obedient towards Timar. She permitted him to take her hand; she permitted him to look long into her eyes; when he came and when he went she pressed his hand and smiled—and every day Mrs. Sophie found fresh things to repeat to Timar, which his betrothed had said about him.

Timar believed that he was a fortunate man indeed in the love of his chosen bride. The wedding day arrived, and once more the guests crowded to the house as on that previous unlucky marriage day. But there was no misfortune this time.

The bridegroom took his bride to church from the house of Brasowitsch, which was now her own. The wedding-feast was at the house of the bridegroom. Mamma Sophie had presided at the preparations for this banquet; but Athalie remained at home, looking out of the window, half hidden by the curtains, to see the long row of guests as they had come on her own hapless wedding day. She watched from the same window where she had once before watched for her own bridegroom. She watched till the bridal party returned in one

carriage, and if during their absence the whole company had been invoking blessings on the married pair, she had been invoking something quite the opposite.

Timea had not found the ceremony nearly so fine as Mrs. Sophie's description of it. The priest had on no golden vestments—there had been no silver crown, no singing even—there had been no silken canopy held over their heads, no drinking from the sacred cup, nor march about the altar. There was not even an altar. There had been nothing but a preacher in a black gown, who said all sorts of things; and she thought "Gospodi Pomilui" would have sounded far more magical. She had not once knelt, but merely pronounced the marriage oath. To her Oriental imagination, this Protestant ceremonial seemed very bald. She had understood nothing, except that she was married. But perhaps with time!—

The fine banquet was over at last. The guests separated, and the bride remained in the house of her husband. When Timar was at last alone with Timea, he sat down beside her, and took her hand in his. His heart beat violently, and he trembled with emotion. This precious treasure, for which he had so longed, was now in his possession. He need only open his arms to draw her to his breast. But he dared not do it. He felt as if separated from her by a spell.

His wife, his other self, was indifferent to his presence. She did not stir at his touch, or glow at his approach. If only once she would cast down her eyes at his touch on her shoulder! If but a blush would overspread her pale face at his caress! But no; she remained cold and silent—passionless as a ghost. She looked just as she did when Timar woke her from her death-like sleep on the ship—just as she did when she sat on the edge of her berth, and was unconscious that her night-dress had slid from her person—just as she did when she was told of her father's death. Just so rigid and unconscious she looked now, when he whispered in her ear, "My beloved!"

A marble statue she seemed—a statue which moved and surrendered itself, but which had no real life or consciousness. She stared, but she was not excited or terrified. Timar could do with her as he pleased; she endured it all silently, even when he loosened her abundant hair, and let it fall over her shoulders: he could press his lips on her pale cheek, but his warm breath, which fell upon her face, kindled no warmth in

return. Timar thought if but once he could fold this cold form to his heart the spell would be broken; and yet he shivered at the daring fancy. He felt as if he should be committing a treason, against which his every shuddering nerve protested.

"Timea," said he tenderly, "do you know that you are my wife?"

"Yes; I know it."

"Do you love me?"

She looked at him with large, dark, astonished eyes; and from those questioning orbs he got no more response than if he had sought to read in the stars of heaven the secrets of eternity. Then she cast her glances downward.

"Do you feel no love for me?" implored Timar; and he sighed deeply.

Again that strange look, and the pale-faced woman asked—

"Love? What is that?"

What is love? What is it? All the wise men of the world cannot explain it to one who has not experienced it. What is love? There is no need of words for those who have felt it for themselves.

"O, you child!" sighed Timar, withdrawing from his wife's side.

Timea rose.

"No, my lord; I am no child. I know what I am—your wife. That I promised to be, and swore before God. I will be your faithful, submissive wife. That is my destiny. You have done so many services for me, that my whole life is due to you. You are my master. I will do whatever you command—all you wish."

Timar turned away, and buried his face in his hands.

The look of this woman accepting her fate with resignation froze his blood. Who could have the courage to embrace a martyr?—a holy statue, bearing the palm-branch and crown of thorns? What man's blood could kindle at the sight of a wife returning from the grave?

"I will do as you bid me!"

Timar now felt what a sorrowful victory he had won.

He had taken to wife a wondrously beautiful marble statue!

CHAPTER II.

A DEMON GUARDIAN.

It has happened before now, that a man has found himself a stranger to his wife's heart and affections. And, too soon, Timar learned that he had never quickened the pulsations of Timea's heart. He hoped time might thaw this frigid nature. It was winter now; perhaps the spring, with its opening buds and blossoms, would awaken more tender feelings, and rouse the dormant love that he felt sure must exist for him.

The daughter of Mohammedan parents is always educated to the usage that he who is to be her lord and husband must never see her face till after the marriage service. It is not customary to ask her, "Do you love?" Neither priest nor lover propounds that question. It is all a matter of submission. Her husband will honour her, unless he find her unfaithful; and then it becomes his right and privilege to dispose of her life. The main conditions are, that she shall possess a beautiful face, bright eyes, heavy hair, and a sweet breath. The state of her heart is not to be considered at all.

In her foster-father's house, Timea learned something more. She discovered that amongst Christians a play of fancy is permitted—yes, that frequent opportunities for indulging it are given. What a pleasure to feel the approving eyes of a lover! What ecstasy to be told, "You look well in this neat-fitting garment!"—"You should always wear your hair low!" What a thrill somebody's smile could produce! And yet, why should so innocent a pleasure be

productive of so much pain? Poor Timea had suffered her measure of it already.

Timea respected Timar, and obeyed him as all women should obey their husbands. She expected to sacrifice every drop of her blood if ever a thought entered her mind except as connected with her wifely duties. She never yielded even to a mental suggestion of what might have been. She buried her feelings, and allowed her heart to petrify.

She became wife to a man whom she honoured, to whom she owed a debt of gratitude, and whose faithful assistant she meant to be. It is an every-day story—the disappointment of the one, and the self-sacrifice of the other.

Timar took his bride through Switzerland and Italy for their wedding journey. They returned as they went; neither the beautiful Swiss scenery, nor the sweet-smelling fields of Italy, nor the wonders of the Eternal City, furnished a balsam for the husband's sick soul, or roused the stony nature of the marble statue. He lavished upon her all the jewels and finery in dress that money could buy. He accompanied her to all the enchanting places of amusement. Nothing moved her. She was gentle, attentive, yielding, and grateful; but her inner life was never stirred—he could not reach beyond the surface. Whether at home or abroad, in joy or in sorrow, she was imperturbable. Her heart was buried. Timar had taken to himself a dead woman. With the consciousness of this, he returned home.

For a time he thought of leaving Komorn, and settling permanently in Vienna. Perhaps new scenes and new social relations might benefit them both.

But he changed his mind suddenly. He decided to remain and fit up the old home of Brasowitsch as a residence. His own former apartments were to be converted into offices for his business purposes. He could thus be from home all day, and yet not have it a noticeable fact that his wife was left alone.

In the eyes of the world they were a model couple. They went into society together, and anticipated each other's wants. Timea always called her husband's attention to the hour for departure; and, arm in arm, they withdrew. Every man envied Timar his happiness! What a blessed lot was his, with all his wealth, and such a beautiful, thoughtful wife!

But the spring days only tended to make more impassable the glacier-like wall between them.

Timar cursed his fate.

All his wealth could not purchase for him the love of his wife. His riches appeared to him to be a deplorable misfortune. The four narrow walls of a poor man's cottage brought those nearer together who belonged together. The day-labourer, or the farm-hand, with his one room, one bed, and one table, was happier than Timar. While the wood-sawyer saws his allotted stint, his wife takes hold of one end of the log; and when the day's work is done, they sit side by side on the ground, and eat bean broth out of one dish, and kiss each other. And so Timar's pitiful prayer was, "If we were only poor!"

But poverty is seldom prayed for. Nor did it come to Timar. Impossibilities became possible with him; whatever would have been another man's ruin, proved a glorious success to *him*. He threw double sixes in the game of life every time.

And all he acquired he would willingly have given for one heartfelt kiss from Timea. And yet it is said that money is all-powerful! No. It cannot purchase love.

Timar wished he might hate his wife. If he could only make himself believe that she loved another—that she was untrue to him! But he had no motive for hate. No one saw Timea, save on the arm of her husband. In society, her manner was so dignified and majestic that familiar approach to her was impracticable. She never danced. She said publicly that as a wife she did not choose to learn. She always sought the companionship of older ladies; and if her husband was gone a week on business, she never left her house during that time.

And in this unhappy home the eagle eye of Athalie closely observed and studied the wretched wife.

Timea's honour was not under the protection of a guardian angel, but of an evil spirit, who watched her every step and word—her every thought and tear. The disturbing sighs of her dreams did not escape Athalie, who heartily hated both the husband and wife, and who would have rejoiced to expose the faintest sinful shadow that might darken the home so kindly furnished to Mrs. Sophie and her merciless daughter. Athalie was a genuine house-fiend in matters great and small. She knew well that Timea, with the magnanimity

natural to her, wished to consider her former young mistress her sister, and treat her as a lady always. Athalie took a diabolical delight in making the world feel that she was only a servant.

Timea had daily to take by force a broom from her hand, or her own clothes, which she officiously brushed when visitors were present; and when guests were there to dine she could seldom be dragged out of the kitchen. When Timea took possession of the house, Athalie's extensive wardrobe was returned to her intact. But now she selected only the most shabby clothes in which to appear, and an extra rip in her dress, or an added drop of oil, was maliciously provided, if thereby Timea's discomfiture could be increased, or her pride more deeply wounded.

Timea might be hurt, but she never lost her self-control. She quietly found means of disposing of these unbecoming garments, and replacing them with others of the same material as her own.

Athalie's most successful and most exquisite means of torture was in playing on the feelings of both the husband and the wife; and, because her method was peculiar, all this had to be borne without a word.

Alone with Timea, she would say, with a deep sigh, "What a noble husband you have, Timea! how he loves you, and how happy you are!" To Timar, with artless reproaches, she would begin, "Why do you stay away so long? Timea is in despair. If you could know how anxiously she has watched for you! Go quietly to her, and give her a surprise. Put your hands over her eyes, and see if she can guess who it is."

And these sneers had to be borne. Nobody knew better than Athalie how miserable they both were; and her chief joy was to increase their woe. She was a living irony, and forced herself, with demoniac smiles and flattery, into their desolate life.

Mrs. Sophie received the benefit of Athalie's true feelings. The daughter terrified her poor, weak mother, with her fits of passion and taunts for having brought her into this world of misery, blaming her for the life she loathed and yet was too cowardly to terminate. Holding her mother responsible for all the calamities of the house of Brasowitsch, she would take her by the arms, and, fairly shaking the breath out of

her body shriek into her face, "Why did you give birth to me?"

And when her fury was spent, first on her mother, and then on herself, by tearing off her clothes in a rage, and only blowing out the candle in part, that the dying flame might exhale the disagreeable odour of wick and grease, she threw herself upon her bed, gnashing her teeth, with a malediction on the whole household; and then she was ready to sleep, provided that she heard in the stillness of the night a door opened and locked again.

It was the young husband going to his solitary room. With the knowledge and satisfaction that both the husband and wife were thoroughly miserable, Athalie fell into a sound sleep.

And this drama was acted daily. But neither of the actors betrayed the real state of the case.

No angry word, nor excited conversation, nor even an audible sigh, was manifest.

Timea remained as she had been; but day by day Timar's countenance grew darker. Sometimes he would sit hours at his wife's side, perhaps he held her hand, but he did not look into her eyes. Then he suddenly arose, and went away, without uttering a syllable. On the whole, men cannot keep their secrets so well as women.

Latterly Timar had the habit of taking frequent journeys. He would mention a day when he expected to return; but he would be back earlier than the time set, or he would surprise his wife at unusual hours. He acted as if accident had brought him home, and as if he did not wish to show what he really was looking for. But it was written on his forehead. He was suspicious. He feared.

One day Timar announced that he was called to the estate at Levetinczy, to be gone a month. All preparations were made for a lengthened absence. Athalie was present when the cold adieux and conventional kiss were given. She smiled sardonically. Another, perhaps, would not have seen the sneer in this smile; but Timar saw and interpreted it: he carried the sting with him. He travelled till afternoon towards Levetinczy. After dinner he ordered the carriage to be turned, and he reached Komorn again about midnight.

There were two ways of entering his house and the

private apartments of his wife and his own, the keys of which he always carried. He could go in without anyone's knowledge. A small ante-room separated his room from Timea's. She had a habit of never locking her door; for she liked to read before going to sleep; and it was the chambermaid's duty to come in late, and attend to the extinguishing of the lights.

Timar neared the door, and opened it noiselessly. The night-lamp, with its milk-white shade, shed a pale light through the room. Timar drew back the bed-curtains.

There lay the sleeping innocent statue before him, as she was once in the cabin of the Saint Barbara, when with exciting heart-throbs he recalled her to life. She seemed to be sleeping as soundly now. She had no presentiment of his presence. He had no power to move those closed eyelids by his will. And yet a woman can see in dreams, and feel the presence of the man she loves.

Timar leaned over her bosom, and counted the heart-throbs. The pulsations were regular and quiet. No perfidious sign. No nourishment for that hungry monster, jealousy, looking for prey.

Long he stood there, gazing uninterruptedly at the sleeping figure. Suddenly he was startled. Athalie was standing before him, dressed, and a wax taper in her hand!

Again that painful, insulting smile about her lips.

"You have forgotten something?" she asked.

He trembled like a thief caught in the act.

"Hush!" And he motioned to Athalie, pointing to the bed, and at the same time hurrying away. "I have forgotten my papers."

"Shall I waken Timea to find them for you?"

Timar was angry that he should be caught at a trick, the first time in his life.

His papers would not be found in Timea's room.

"Do not waken her; they are not here, but in my room. I was simply looking for my keys."

"And have you found them?" she asked jeeringly, and, relighting her taper, she obligingly led Timar to his own room. She placed the candle upon a table, but did not retire.

With a perplexed look, Timar rummaged through his papers, not finding what he wanted, for he did not know what he was seeking.

Finally, he locked his writing-desk, without taking anything from it.

Again his eye met the sneering laugh that played about Athalie's lips.

"Do you wish something?" she asked, accepting the questioning glance that met hers.

Timar made no reply.

"Shall I speak?"

Timar knew that his fate might be in her words, but he made no attempt at an answer.

"Would you like me to speak of Timea?" she whispered again; and coming nearer she made him feel the fascination of those beautiful serpent's eyes.

"What do you know?" Timar asked excitedly.

"Everything! Do you want me to speak?"

Timar waged battle with himself.

"I'll tell you to begin with, that you will be very unhappy when you hear what I know."

"Speak!"

"Very well. Listen. I know as well as yourself that Timea does not love you. And you know as well as I whom she does love. One thing only I know which you are not sure of, that Timea is as true to you as an angel."

Timar quivered convulsively at these words.

"You expected something else, did you not? It would have gratified you if you could have learned something that would have brought dishonour upon her, that you might have thrust her from you. No; you possess a marble statue, a stone that cannot be moved to love you, neither does it deceive you. O, I know that only too well. Your domestic honour is well protected. Had you placed the hundred-eyed Argus on the watch, it would have been no more effectual than through me. What that woman does, speaks, or thinks, I learn; she cannot hide a feeling in the depth of her heart which I do not fathom and discover. You guarded your honour well when you took me into your house. And though you hate me, you will not drive me from her. For you realise that so long as I am here, that fellow whom you fear will not approach your family treasure. I am the impenetrable lock. You are safe. While you are away we receive no visitors; this house is then a cloister; letters to her you will find with seals unbroken on your table; read them or

burn them at your option. She never steps into the street in your absence. A simple ride, and then I am with her. Our only walk is toward the island. I see her suffer, but she never complains. And why should she complain to me? to me! who suffer the same anguish, and on her account. Since her ghostly face entered this house, I have been miserable. Before that I was happy. I was loved. Do not fear; I am not going to shed tears. I love no longer. I only hate now. Your house and your wife are safe. Go where you please in peace. For if she should so much as exchange one loving, tender word with that man, or return his smile, I would take my rights in my own hand and vindicate us both. You leave behind a deadly weapon, a jealous woman's rage; and though you shudder, you accept my aid in despair."

Timar felt his blood run cold at this outburst of the woman's furious passion, and the energy of his soul became benumbed.

"I will repeat. You married a woman who loves another, and that other belonged to me. You took this house from me; all my possessions turned to dust under your control. Then you made Timea mistress here. Your scheme for conquest required that she, too, for whom you fought so hard, must suffer also. You have made a martyr of her. You never will find balsam and food in this house for your hungry, wounded soul! You may go, Baron Levetinczy, with this crumb of comfort: So long as you live Timea will be as one dead; and the love, the bread of life for which you beg, will be returned to you—a stone!"

She drew back, and Timar, exhausted, fell into an armchair.

"And now . . . drive me from here if you dare!"

Then, proud as a conquering demon, she left Timar in total darkness, carrying with her the taper she had brought.

Something prompted him to spring forward as he saw Athalie start towards Timea's room.

"You remain in this cursed house only because a promise binds me, but it shall not be with us together."

And then he longed to rush to Timea's apartment, as on that eventful night when the ship sank—catch her in his arms, and shout, "The house is sinking; we must fly for our lives!"

O, if he might gather her under his protection, away from those hateful, watchful eyes!

The door opened again, and Athalie looked at him once more. Then she passed into her own room and locked the door. Timar was in darkness.

How great was that darkness!

His fate was decided.

He arose, felt for his hat and great coat, and stealthily and noiselessly slunk out of his own house, like a thief.

He was driven out. April storm, snow, and sleet received him. The wind blew, and the snow blinded him. Poor Michael Timar started off at an hour and in weather that were well fitted to oppress the strongest soul.

CHAPTER III.

SPRING MEADOWS.

Winter went with the traveller as far as Baja. Here and there new-fallen snow covered the fields. The forests were still bare. The stormy and dreary season well suited the traveller's sad thoughts.

The pitiless girl was right. Not only was the man unhappy, but his wife was also. And the man was doubly wretched, because he had brought this misfortune on both. His punishment had been the result of his first mis-step. When he first took Timea's fortune, it had been his intention to win the girl with it. He had succeeded, and now he was punished by his success.

A poor man is a nobody, but he may be happy; a rich man is respected, but he is often miserable. But why should Timar be wretched? Is there nothing in him worthy to be loved? Has he none of the attractions which win a woman's heart? He has good features, expressive eyes, a fine figure, healthy blood, and a heart capable of loving. Could not a woman love him, if he were poor? Has he nothing in himself to inspire affection? Yet in spite of it all—all that is loveable in him—Timea does not love him. This is his ever-recurring thought. The bitterest self-reproach is not so hard for a man to bear as the guilty consciousness that he must admit to himself, "My wife cannot love me."

Of what value then is life? What aim has one for the long days to come? To sow, to reap, to transact business, to heap

up gold? And then to sow, to reap, to heap up gold again? Perhaps to do good to other men? Yes; all these are objects. A man who finds no love at home, goes out into the street hoping to find it there. Some men, in such cases, turn to planting trees; others devote themselves to birds; others become philanthropists. And what is the gain of it all? Does it reward a man to live for the good of others? Such bitter thoughts possessed Timar in his journey to Baja.

There he halted for a while. He had ordered his letters to be forwarded to the branch house there, where he had one of his business agencies. He opened the pile of correspondence listlessly. What did he care whether the vintage was good; whether the English duties were higher; or whether gold had fallen? Nevertheless, he did find two letters which interested him. He put them in his pocket, and his old energy returned to him. Again he gave orders to his clerks and agents, noted the reports laid before him, and after he had arranged all his affairs hurried off once more. This journey had an object. He had a design—that of giving pleasure to some poor people—a genuine pleasure.

The weather changed again. The skies grew bluer and clearer. The sun shone brightly, as it usually does in Hungary when winter is giving place to the coming spring. As Timar travelled southward, all nature seemed to have made a leap forward of weeks instead of days. Spring flowers decked the fields. On the meadows the grass was already green; and the sides of the hills were overspread with almond-trees and apricots in bloom.

The two days' journey was like an enchanter's vision. Day before yesterday, snow-clad fields in Komorn; and to-day, orchards in blossom all along the Lower Danube.

In the evening Timar reached Castle Levetinczy, where he found all in order; for Johann Fabula was superintendent here—and overseer too of a whole squadron of vessels.

He suggested, as a diversion after business reports, that his gracious master should go hunting.

Herr von Levetinczy did go duck-shooting at Johann's suggestion. The skiff was got ready, and provisioned for a week. Timar took his gun, with plenty of ammunition, and set out. Nobody would be surprised if he were gone a week, for just now game was abundant. But Timar, though fond of shooting, did not even once load his gun. He let his boat glide down

the current to the point of the island Ostrova; then he took the helm in his own hands, and crossed over the Danube. At the end of this island he turned to the east, and, in the midst of the rush-grown shores beyond, he saw the poplars toward which he was bound. Between the rushes there was a zigzag course—plain enough to one who understood it. Where Timar had once been he could go again, even in the darkest night.

And what were Narcissa and Almirus about now? What should they do in this fine spring weather? Naturally they too were hunting.

Mice are game at night; and therefore Almirus cannot share in that sport; and little birds, as well as marmots, are strictly forbidden to both cat and dog by their gentle mistress. But there are shell-fish to catch, and this is good fun. Almirus wades into the water, and puts a fore-paw in between some gravel-stones where there is a dark hole. Suddenly the dog springs up, balances himself on three feet, and brings out a crab clinging to the other paw, which he shakes off violently, while Narcissa runs around, as if wondering how the appetising contents of the shell-fish can be got at. The crab now tries to crawl back to the water, but the two hunters pursue the creature, pushing it, now with one paw and now with another, till they succeed in turning it over on its back; and now all three—cat, dog, and crab—are at a loss what to do next.

But suddenly Almirus' attention is drawn toward a new quarter. The dog recognises a friend, and rushes to meet him, for he well knows the rower of the skiff.

Timar springs to land, makes his boat fast to a stump, and strokes the dog's head, as if to say, "Well, old friend, what can I do for you?" and Almirus replies in eloquent Newfoundland dialect. Suddenly a cry of anguish is heard, which betokens a catastrophe. Narcissa has gone too near to the crab, who with his claws has caught the cat by the ear, while all his feelers are stuck fast in her back. Timar rushes to the scene of action, and with great presence of mind seizes the creature at the back, where he can do so safely, then flings him to the ground with such violence that his evil spirit flees to its own place out of this world; while Narcissa springs delightedly to the shoulder of her knightly deliverer, and paws gratefully. Then Timar takes his effects out of the

boat, and packs them in his travelling knapsack, to sling over his shoulder. But the gun—what shall he do with that? He does not want to leave it behind, and he remembers Almirus's objections to firearms. But all of a sudden it occurs to him to give it to the dog to carry, as if it were a walking-stick; and the obedient creature takes it in his mouth and goes toward the cabin. The man follows his guide. Timar's very spirit seemed changed as he set foot on this island. The place was a sort of Paradise. Fruit-trees blossomed about him. The grass was a green and soft carpet, bespangled with violets and golden dandelions. The bright sunshine drew out the fragrance of the flowers, and loaded the air with perfumes. Bees hummed in the thickets. A mysterious murmur in the air speaks of God. The place is a temple; and, that it may have music, the lark sings a song of praise, and the nightingale pours forth the pathetic song of David in the Psalms—only more sweet and tender than David's notes.

Through a gap in the thickets of elder, where the lilac-coloured blossoms crowned the shrubbery, Timar saw the simple dwelling of the inhabitants of the island. He stood silent and motionless, gazing at it. The little cabin was in flames—but not on fire, except with a blaze of roses which covered it to the very roof.

All around it for two acres, everywhere there were roses! Thousands of bushes, standard rose-trees, pyramids, thickets, hedges of roses! There were meadows and labyrinths of these flowers, enough to dazzle one with their glowing beauty; and the air was heavy with their delicious odour. Scarcely had Timar emerged from one of these thickets of roses, when a cry of joy welcomed him, and a glad voice called him by name—

“O, Herr Timar!” and the speaker ran forward to greet him.

Timar at once recognised Naomi, for it was she who thus eagerly bade him welcome. He had not seen her for three years, and during this time the little maiden had grown very pretty; her figure had developed, her complexion glowed with healthy colour, and a soft fire shone in her tender eyes. Her dress too, though simple, was more tasteful and carefully arranged than formerly. In her abundant golden hair she wore a half-opened rosebud.

“Welcome, Herr Timar!” cried the girl, as she approached the guest. She pressed his hand with cordial

friendliness. Timar returned the pressure, and fixed his eyes on her. Here was a face that beamed with delight at his coming.

"How long it is since we saw you!" cried Naomi.

"And you," said Timar, gently, "have grown very lovely since we met;" for tenderness seemed now as natural to him as roughness had often been in the past.

In truth, the girl had changed greatly for the better during these few years.

It is not unusual for some girls, on the threshold of womanhood, to become coarser and more common in outline and expression; while others change and develop into unexpected beauty. Perhaps this is the result of the development of the inner nature, which marks its good or evil quality upon the features, so that the character of the maiden reveals itself in the form and expression of her countenance.

Naomi's face was full of sweetness and sympathy.

"Then you remember me?" asked Timar, forgetting to drop the girl's hand.

"We have often talked of you."

"Is Mamma Theresa well?"

"Here she comes to speak for herself."

Almirus had been the cause of his mistress' coming from the house. The dog had run ahead, with the gun in his mouth. Theresa had thus discovered that a stranger was approaching, and she had gone out to meet him. When she saw Timar she hastened to greet him. She had recognised her former visitor, the supercargo, and she cried out—

"God has brought you to us! How long we have expected you! Then you had not forgotten us?" She embraced Timar without ceremony, and then, observing the full knapsack which he carried—

"Almirus," she called to the dog, "take this knapsack, and carry it into the house."

"But there is roast meat in it," said Timar. "Ah! Then, Almirus, take care that Narcissa does not get at it!"

But here Naomi pouted. "Now, mother, our Narcissa is not so ill-bred as that."

Mamma Theresa kissed her daughter to mollify her, and peace was restored.

"Let us go in," said Theresa, taking Timar's arm confidentially. "Come, Naomi."

"Yes, as soon as I get my basket; it is full now."

A large basket, woven of withes, and covered with a white cloth, stood near by. Naomi went to it to take it by the two handles.

Timar sprang forward, saying, "I will help you, for it must be heavy."

Naomi laughed, and, taking the cloth from the basket, showed him its contents. It was full of rose leaves. Timar took hold of one handle, and so they carried the basket, with its fragrant load, between them.

"You make rose-water then?" asked Timar. Theresa smiled.

"See, Naomi, how he finds out everything!"

"In Komorn they distil a great deal of rose-water. Many poor women earn their living by this process."

"These roses are God's blessing elsewhere as well as with us. This beautiful flower, which makes the world so charming to men, not only gives pleasure but bread. Last year the harvest was poor. The frost hurt our fruits and our grapes. The cold wet summer killed many of our bees. Our poultry failed us, and if it had not been for the roses we would have been badly off. But they bloomed as usual, and gave us enough to eat for the year. We distilled three hundred gallons of rose-water, and sent it to Servia, and got plenty of grain and other provisions in return. O, you blessed, beautiful, life-giving roses!"

The little cabin had been enlarged since Timar had been there last. A kitchen for the rose-water business, and a drying oven for the leaves, had been built on. By the hearth in the kitchen stood a large copper kettle, from which, drop by drop, the precious liquid ran out; while, in a great tub near, the rest of the rose leaves were pressed together, and on a broad bench the fresh leaves were spread out to dry and fade.

Timar helped Naomi to empty the contents of her basket on the bench. The odour was an intoxication—a revel of fragrance. Naomi laid her head on the soft heap of rose leaves, and said—

"How lovely it would be to sleep on such a pillow!"

"Foolish child!" said her mother; "you would never wake again. The perfume would kill you."

"Ah, that would be a pleasant death!"

Theresa reproved her.

"Would you die and leave your mother, you naughty girl!"

The daughter kissed her mother, and patted her, saying, "No, no; my love, my darling, I would never want to leave you!"

"But you should never speak lightly of such a terrible thing, and frighten your poor mother—should she, Herr Timar?"

Timar agreed with Theresa that such a jest was not right, for no kind of death could be pleasant even to think of.

"Now take care of the distillation. See that the leaves do not get scorched. I'll go to the kitchen, and cook a good meal for our guest. You will remain with us all day, will you not?"

"I will stay here to-day and to-morrow. Give me some work to do, so that I can help you. So long as you give me work, so long I will remain with you."

"Then we will keep you a week," cried Naomi; "for I can find work enough to last that long."

"What sort of work can you find for Herr Timar, you foolish child?" asked her mother, laughingly.

"To crush the rose leaves in the press."

"But perhaps he doesn't understand how to do it."

"Why not?" retorted Timar; "I often did it in my mother's house."

"Your mother was a good woman, was she not?" asked Naomi.

"A most excellent one."

"And you loved her dearly."

"Very dearly."

"Is she still living?"

"She died a long time ago."

"And you have no one left?"

Timar looked down, full of sad thoughts, and shook his head.

"No one."

He spoke the truth.

Naomi looked with sympathetic pity into Timar's eyes, as he uttered these words, "I have nobody."

They were fateful words.

Timar observed that Mamma Theresa remained standing in the door. She seemed to want to go, and yet to want to stay. A thought crossed his mind.

"Look here, Mamma Theresa! Don't go into the kitchen to cook supper for me. I have plenty to eat in my knapsack, so you need only lay the table. There will be enough for all of us."

"But who has been so thoughtful about providing for you on your journey?"

"Herr Johann Fabula."

"Ah, that is the boatswain who was with you here before! Is he here now?"

"He is loading ships on the other side of the river."

Theresa saw what Timar was thinking about. And, not to be behind him in delicacy, she wished to prove to him that she was not afraid to leave Naomi with him.

"No; I will go and attend to supper, and to the roses too," she said. "And you, Naomi, can take Herr Timar round the island, and show him what changes have been made during his absence."

Naomi was an obedient child. Without a word she did what her mother requested. She tied a gay Turkish silk handkerchief on her head, which made a lovely frame for her picture-like face. Timar recognised this handkerchief as his own gift to her.

"Good-bye, dear." "Good-bye." So said the mother and child to each other, and kissed each other at parting. As often as they went away from the house, even for a short stay, they took formal leave of one another, like people going to a distant land. And when they met again, they embraced each other anew, as if they had been separated for years. For these poor women had no one in the world save each other.

Naomi looked at her mother enquiringly; and Theresa nodded her head, as much as to say, "Yes; go."

So Timar and the girl walked off in company.

The footpath was so narrow that they were pressed close together as they went forward; but Almirus, with a wonderful sense of propriety, pushed his head between the pair, so as to make a suitable distance between them.

The island had in three years improved much by cultivation. Even on the rocky heights one could see the evidences of the hand of industry. Footpaths had been opened in the thickets; the underbrush had been cleared away; and the Lombardy poplars had grown to such thickness of trunk

that two men could not reach round one tree. In place of wild shrubs, fruit-bearers had been planted; and where the orchard came to an end, a hedge encircled a grassy meadow, in which goats and lambs pastured. One white lamb had a red ribbon round its neck, and was evidently Naomi's pet. When the flock saw her, they bleated, as if in salutation, and followed her to the other side of the meadow, where she went out through the hedge which enclosed the pasture.

Just beyond was a grove of black walnut trees, with huge trunks, each with a bark like silk, a half-ell thick.

"These walnut trees," said Naomi, "are my mother's pride; they are fifteen years old, a year younger than I."

A little ahead of this grove was a morass, which Timar remembered as difficult to pass when he was last here. It was now overgrown with yellow and white water-lilies; and in the midst of it stood two storks in silent contemplation of the scene.

As Timar opened the gate and led his companion out from the hedge-enclosure, he noticed that she seemed a little afraid.

"Are you always so alone on this island?" he asked.

"We generally are: but now and then people come to trade with us. And wood-cutters come in the winter, who help us to clear the land, and they take the wood in payment; and as to other work, we get along by ourselves."

"But the gathering of the fruit must be a great labour."

"O, our friends who sing in the hedges lighten our labours there! See how many nests there are in the bushes. These are the homes of our day-labourers! Nobody disturbs them, and they serve us well. Listen to their singing!"

The meadow indeed re-echoed with this Eden-like concert.

Suddenly Naomi started, and nervously put her hand on her heart. She turned so pale that Timar hastened to support her, fearing that she might faint.

"What is the matter?"

The girl hid her face, and, like a child, half laughing, half crying, she said—

"See, there he comes!"

"What comes?"

"Look yonder!"

It was only a big, mottled frog, that leaped through the grass, with eyes fixed on the two human beings, evidently

ready, in case of need, to make a desperate plunge into the nearest ditch.

Naomi was too terrified even to run away.

"What! you are afraid of frogs?" asked Timar.

"I am so afraid of them that I should die if one of them touched me."

"That is like a girl. Yes; you girls are fond of cats, because they purr round you; and yet you are afraid of frogs, because they are ugly. Yet frogs are as harmless as birds, and are the gardener's best friends. There are many insects that come by night, when the birds are asleep, to injure the plants; but the frogs are awake and ready for these enemies. Look, now; you take this harmless frog for your foe, but he is far from that. He is on the look-out for insects that do a world of damage. Do not disturb him. He is after a wasp now."

Just then the frog made a spring, stuck out his long tongue, and one wasp disappeared for ever.

"Now, don't you think our frog a good fellow, even though his skin is a little mottled?"

Naomi did not seem quite so afraid of the insect-catcher. She permitted Timar to take her by the hand, and she listened to him while he told her of the blue frog of Surinam, for which a King of Prussia once paid 4,500 thalers. She listened to his account of those frogs which, like glow-worms, carried lights into houses, and could also sing; as in Brazil, where, it was said, they went to the opera, and quite drowned out the chorus with their own peculiar melody!

Naomi laughed at this story; but her laugh was a mixture of pleasure and fear.

"If only they did not croak so!"

"Why, my child, that is their way of making love to their ladies! The male frog alone can speak, the female frog is dumb. The gentleman frog keeps saying all night long, 'How lovely you are! how charming you are!' Can you conceive of a more gallant creature than this same loving frog?"

Naomi was greatly amused.

"Then, too, the frog is a learned animal; he understands the changes of the weather. If it is going to rain, he comes out and croaks; and if it is to be fair, he slips into the pool again."

Naomi's curiosity was roused.

"I'll catch one for you," said Timar; and soon he came towards her with an imprisoned frog in his two hands.

Naomi trembled and shivered. Her face grew first red and then pale.

"Look," said Timar, half opening his closed hands; "can you imagine a prettier animal? As green as grass; and his little legs as delicate as the hands of a Liliputian! How his heart beats! How he looks at us with his shy, black eyes; and yet he is not afraid of us."

Naomi, half frightened, half curious, stretched out her hand to touch the creature, and then drew it back hastily.

"Take hold of it; it is the most harmless thing in the world. Reach out your hand!"

Naomi, half laughing, half shuddering, looked into Timar's eyes, and held out her hand; but she shivered when the cold frog touched her fingers. Then she laughed outright, like a child who has been put into the water against its will, and is pleased when it finds itself there.

"See, the frog is quite comfortable in your hands; we will carry it to the house, put it in a covered glass, and give it a little ladder. The frog will be quite at home there, and will climb up the ladder to catch flies. Give it to me; I will carry it."

"No," said Naomi; "let it alone; I will take it home."

She closed her hand softly, but firmly, so that the creature could not escape. "Now, let us hurry back, for the dew begins to fall, and the grass is wet."

They returned to the cabin. Naomi ran ahead, and called out to her mother, "Mother, see what a fine bird we have caught!"

Theresa replied, "You know I will not allow any bird to be caged!"

"But this is a queer sort of bird. Herr Timar caught it for me, and put it into my hand."

Mamma Theresa was amazed when she saw the frog in her daughter's hand.

"See how his eyes shine!" cried Naomi, smiling. "We will put him under a glass. We will feed him with flies, and he shall be our barometer. O, you dear little frog; you precious treasure!"

And she put the frog close to her own cheek.

Theresa turned in amazement to Timar. "You must be a

magician!" said she. "Yesterday the girl would have run to the end of the earth to get rid of a frog!"

But Naomi was full of enthusiasm over the frog. She repeated to her mother all Timar had told her of this tribe; what useful and amusing animals they were; that what people said of their venom and other mischievous qualities was only the talk of ignorant peasants; and she added that it was absurd to be afraid of such harmless creatures.

Timar meanwhile was cutting the rounds for the frog's ladder, and soon had put the little green weather-prophet into a glass half full of water, over the broad mouth of which was laid a paper cover, pierced with air-holes large enough to permit the imprisoned prophet to see flies; but the wise frog naturally sank to the bottom of the water, and neither noticed flies nor anything else.

Naomi was delighted to find that he enjoyed the water so much.

"Herr Timar," said Theresa, as they all three sat down to supper, "you have performed a miracle on Naomi, and also done her a world of good. Our island was a Paradise, where the only thing my child had to fear was the frogs, and at the sound of their croaking she used to turn pale with terror. No power would have induced her to cross the pasture, and go near the swamp, where the frogs are so innumerable. And now you have made her a new creature, and given her a perfect home again."

"A perfect home!" said Timar.

Theresa sighed deeply.

"Why do you sigh?" asked Naomi.

"That you should know!"

And Timar did know what the sigh meant.

Naomi tried to turn the conversation once more to the subject of her new interest.

"I have been afraid of frogs," she said, "ever since a monstrous dark-spotted one was killed before my eyes. A cruel boy did it. He said it was a bull-frog, and that if you scratched it on the back with a nettle, it would roar like a bull; and so he rubbed the weed on the poor creature's skin, and it croaked so that I shall never forget it. It seemed to me as if the poor thing were calling on all his race to avenge him, and his whole body was covered with white foam. Ever since then, I have felt as if his kindred were creeping and

crawling and croaking at me, and ready to poison me. The cruel boy only laughed at the agonised cries of his victim."

"Who was this cruel boy?" asked Timar.

Naomi was silent. Timar guessed the name. He looked at Theresa. She nodded her head, as if she knew his thoughts.

"Has he been here since?" said Timar.

"O, he comes every year, and he has found out how to rob me. He brings a boat with him, and, as I have no money to give him, he takes honey, wax, wool, everything he can get; and I give him anything he asks for, to get rid of him."

"He hasn't been here for some time," said Naomi.

"But I am afraid that he may come any day!"

"I wish he would come now!" cried Naomi.

"Why, my child?"

Naomi's face was overspread with blushes. "But I should like to have him come now," she whispered.

Timar could not help seeing how happy a word of his would make these two women. And he longed to give this pleasure, as a child longs for a dainty of which he has only tasted the crumbs.

Something impelled him to try to share the joys and the sorrows of this island pair.

Supper was over. The sun had set; it was a lovely, warm, and peaceful spring evening. The whole sky glowed like a golden canopy. Not a leaf stirred on the trees. The two women, with their guest, climbed to the top of the rock above their cabin. From thence they could see over the tree-tops, beyond the reedy thickets, far down the Danube. The island was all aglow with many colours—the rosy hues of the apple blossoms, and the red tints of the peach blooms. The poplar trees shook their golden tops over the white buds of the pear trees and over the copper-gray leaves of the plum orchards. The roses climbed in a blaze of crimson up the sides of the cliff, and the dwarf lavender crowned the summit of this rocky outlook.

"How glorious!" cried Timar, overcome with the beauty of the landscape.

"You should see it," said Naomi, "when the larkspur climbs over the rocks, and the lavender blooms with it, like a blue garland."

"I will return and see it," replied Timar.



"Really!" cried the girl; and she pressed his hand with such a clasp as no woman's hand had ever before given him. Then the girl flung her arms round her mother's neck in a tumult of emotion.

A deep stillness reigned over all the scene. Only the monotonous croaking of a thousand frogs broke the silence. The heavens glowed—on one side like the blue turquoise, on the other like the soft opal.

"Do you hear what the frogs sing?" whispered Naomi to Theresa. "They say, 'How lovely you are! how charming you are!' And they say this all night long. O, you darling, you sweet one!" and she kissed her mother tenderly.

Timar forgot himself and all the world. He stood upon the cliff, with his hands folded, and the new moon glittered through the poplar trees. Its colour was like that of pure silver. A new and magical feeling kindled his heart. Was it longing or fear? Was it memory which warned, or hope which deluded him? Was it the beginning of joy, or the end of pain? Was it an emotion which made him akin to God, man, or brute? Was it a presentiment of good, or of ill? Was he moon-struck, or under the influence of the impulse of spring, which every tree, blade of grass, and leaflet feels?

Just so had Timar gazed upon the moon, when that orb shed its flickering beams on the sunken ship. His involuntary thoughts mingled with the magnetic and ghostlike shadows, and seemed to say to him—

"Wilt thou never understand me? To-morrow I will return again, and then thou shalt understand me!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPIDER AMONG THE ROSES.

It was Naomi's duty to give the cows fresh green grass, while her mother Theresa milked them. Timar leaned meanwhile against the stable door, lighted his pipe, and continued the conversation, like a young peasant making love to a farmer's maid. Finally, they filled the kettle with rose-water, boiled down; and they prepared for rest. Timar begged permission to sleep in the bee-house, and here Mother Theresa made for him a bed of new-mown hay, while Naomi patted and raised the bolsters. Scarcely had his head touched the pillow, when he fell into a sweet sleep, and dreamed all night that he had entered the service of a gardener, and was boiling a sea of rose-water.

When he awoke the sun was high, and the bees were humming all about him. He had overslept himself. He discovered that some one had already been in his room, for beside his bed were all the appointments necessary for a gentleman's toilet. Hot water, towels, soap, and brushes, together with his traveling bag, were at hand. Naomi and her mother waited upon him, while he regaled himself with a breakfast just from the dairy.

Then began the day's labour of picking rose leaves. Timar had his wish, which was to stand at the press; Naomi plucked the petals apart; and Mother Theresa busied herself at the boiler.

Timar chatted pleasantly with Naomi about the roses. He forbore to tell her how much they resembled her own red

cheeks, for she would have laughed outright at mention of the comparison. He told her all he had learned in his travels about the varieties of roses; instructive remarks to which Naomi gave the closest attention; and Timar's estimate of her constantly increased. An intelligent, educated man has great influence and power over young, unsophisticated girls.

"And have you visited all these places where these roses have their homes?" she asked, after he had described the various species and their special uses.

"Yes, I have visited many places. I have been in Vienna, Paris, and Constantinople."

"And are they far from here?"

"It would take a man thirty days to walk from here to Vienna; it would take forty days before he could reach Constantinople."

"But you went in a ship, did you not?"

"That is a longer way yet; for we have to stop on the voyage to take in a cargo."

"For whom?"

"For my master, who engaged me."

"Is Herr Brasowitsch still your employer?"

"Who ever told you that he was?"

"The pilot, when you were here the first time."

"Herr Brasowitsch is not my master any longer, for he is dead."

Mother Theresa hastily interrupted—"He dead? he indeed dead? And his wife and daughter?"

"With his death they lost all their possessions."

"Oh, Heavenly Father! then hast thou avenged us on them at last."

"Oh, mother, good mother!" spake Naomi, in a soft, pleading tone.

"Herr Timar, I want to add to what I confided to you long ago, that when that dreadful calamity befell us, and I besought Brasowitsch in vain not to make beggars of us, I bethought me, this man has a wife and child. I will go to the mother and plead with her; she will better understand, and will have pity. I took my child in my arms, and in the burning heat I travelled to Komorn. I found their grand residence, and waited in the vestibule. They would not let me in. Presently the mother came out, with her five-year-old

little daughter. I sank at Mrs. Sophie's feet, and begged that for Christ's dear sake she would have pity on us, and intercede for us with her husband. She only took me by the arm and pushed me down the stairs. I shielded my poor child with both my hands, that no injury might happen to her; but I struck my own head against the pillar that supported the stairway. See, you can detect the scar yet. And her little girl shouted with laughter when she saw us slip down, and heard my poor little waif cry. And so I say now, Hosanna! and blessed be the hand that pushed them down the same steps that the wretched woman threw us."

"O, mother, please do not talk like that!"

"They have found their level then, those proud, haughty people! And now they are in rags, I suppose, and beg from their old acquaintances as fruitlessly as I did of them."

"No, Madame," replied Timar; "some one turned up who protects and cares for them."

"The insanity of it!" cried Theresa, in passionate excitement. "Will he stand in the way of his own fortune, and dare the curse that will destroy him too, if he keeps them in his house?"

Naomi twined herself about her mother, then put both hands over her mouth. Finally she threw herself on her mother's bosom, and locked her lips with kisses. "Dearest, please do not speak so! Do not curse anyone—I cannot bear to hear it. Away with the naughty words; let me kiss them all away."

Theresa came to her senses again. "Do not be afraid, little goosey," she said, stroking her child's head. "Curses are empty words. It is only a wicked, superstitious habit of us old women. God pays no attention to it. He will not write down and save for revengeful fulfilment the imprecations of a poor miserable woman like me. My curse will blast nobody's life."

"But it has blasted mine already," thought Timar, who possessed the full consciousness whose house furnished protection and a home to the impious beings upon whose heads the imprecations fell.

Naomi wished to turn the conversation again upon the more enticing subject of the roses.

"Tell me, where are the Maggori roses to be had, whose perfume is so intoxicating?"



"If you like I will bring you some."

"Where do they grow?"

"In Brazil."

"Is that very far away?"

"On the other side of the world."

"Must you go over the sea to get them?"

"Two months' constant sailing."

"And why must you go there?"

"For business, and to gather Maggori roses for you."

"Then I'd rather have none."

Naomi left the kitchen, and Timar perceived that her eyes filled with tears. She did not return until her basket was heaped full of rose leaves. She then emptied them upon a rush mat, where a large pile already lay. By noon the rose-water was sufficiently boiled, and Madame Theresa announced after dinner that no more work was to be done that day. There would be time to walk about the island, and a traveller who had visited so many lands might give them some advice as to what plants, indigenous to their little Eden, might be put to better use.

"Almirus," said Mother Theresa, "you are to remain at home and watch the house. Lie in front of the verandah, and do not stir till we come back." Almirus understood his mistress, and immediately prepared to obey.

Timar accompanied mother and daughter into the woody portions of the island.

They were hardly out of sight, when Almirus restlessly pricked up his ears, and began to growl angrily. He smelt something. He rose, and laid himself down again. A male voice in the distance began a German song, of which the refrain was—

'She wears, if I mistake it not,
A black, black camisole.'

He came from the bank towards the house, and sang, evidently to attract the attention of the dwellers within, for his fear increased as he heard the dog.

It was Theodore Kristyan.

This time he was dressed as a fop, in a blue frock-coat with yellow buttons, his mantle thrown over his arm.

Almirus never stirred; the dog philosophically considered that if he fell on his hated enemy in his usual way he would

be chained as during former visits. So he wisely kept his contempt of court to himself, and preserved an armed neutrality, save to watch proceedings.

"Your servant, Almirus! Where is your mistress? Can't you bark good naturedly to me for once, you beast? Where is Mamma Theresa? See! I have brought you a fine piece of roast meat. Do eat it, beautiful Almirus!"

Almirus would not even smell of the meat thrown at his feet. There it lay till Narcissa approached; for cats have not a strong stable character. The dog fell into a rage, dug a great hole in the earth, and in this he buried the meat, as provident dogs are apt to preserve for a rainy day the superabundant remnants.

"What a suspicious beast you are!" murmured Theodore to himself. "May I step into the house?"

Almirus did not refuse in words; he simply lifted his jaw a trifle, and showed the questioner a fine set of teeth.

This movement appeared to satisfy Kristyan, and he asked again, "Where can the women be? Perhaps in the perfumery kitchen." He turned and stepped in. Nobody to be seen.

He bathed his face and hands in the vessel of distilled water—heedless that he had spoiled the result of a day's labour.

As he attempted to cross the threshold he found the way barred. Almirus had thrown himself directly across the entrance, and exhibited his teeth with an expression of exultation. "And so I am your prisoner, you brute. Well, I have time to rest me, and can wait here just as easily."

With this he threw himself upon the rush mat, on which Naomi had piled her hill of roses.

"What a comfortable bed I have found! A real Lucullian cushion!"

The women returned with Timar from the interior of the island. Theresa saw with astonishment that Almirus no longer lay in front of the verandah, but was guarding the distillation room.

"What is it, Almirus?"

When Theodore heard Theresa's voice, he conceived a practical jest. He buried himself completely out of sight in the mass of rose leaves; and when Naomi rushed past the dog, looked in, and seeing nothing unusual repeated her

mother's cry, "What is the matter here, Almiræ? Who is here?"—out of the rose heap came the words, "Your own dear bridegroom, my beautiful Naomi!"

Naomi, with a loud cry, stumbled back.

"Well, what is it?" called out her mother, running towards her?

"Amongst the roses!" stammered Naomi.

"What amongst the roses?—a spider?"

Yes, to be sure; a dreadful spider.

Theodore sprang from his nest; and like one who thinks he has been the author of a capital joke, he rushed forward, and with a loud laugh fell on Mother Theresa's neck, and kissed her immoderately.

"Ha! ha! like a magician, I emerge from a sea of roses."

He turned towards Naomi, but she evaded his embraces with agility; and then he was first aware that there was present a third person, Michael Timar.

This knowledge cooled his ardour somewhat, which in fact was only affectation. For that very reason he preferred that the shallowness of his feeling should not be discovered by one in connection with whom he had such unpleasant remembrances.

"Ah! your obedient servant, Sir Secretary," he greeted Timar. "Do we really see each other again? I hope there is not another Turkish Pasha on board your vessel. You need not fear."

Timar shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing in reply.

Thereupon Theodore attempted to seize Naomi by the waist, and to inflict upon her an impulsive demonstration of his affection. She defended herself with a haughty push.

"Do leave the girl in peace," said Mother Theresa, in a harsh, dry tone. "What brought you back again?"

"Softly, softly! Do not drive me off before I have had a chance to make a visit. As if I hadn't the right to embrace and kiss my own little bride! You act as though she would break to pieces if I looked at her. Why are you both so afraid of me?"

"Because we have good reason."

"Now do not be angry, Mamma Theresa. I have not come this time to ask for anything. On the contrary, I bring you a great deal of money—a tremendous sum—so much that you can buy back your fine house of old, your fields and

your garden. You know that I feel it my duty as a son to make good the losses my poor father caused you."

Kristyan had become sentimental to the tear-shedding point; but his tears even did not move his hearers, who remained impassive and self-contained.

"Let us go into the house. What I have to tell you is not intended for everybody's ears."

"You will not find everybody on this solitary island. What you have to communicate can be done in Herr Timar's presence. He is an old friend. But come in; I know you are hungry. That is the sum and substance of the matter."

"O you dear, wise Mamma! how well you know your Theodore's wishes! I have an excellent appetite; and what splendid Greek cake you do make. One's body would like to be all stomach, when one gets sight of your toothsome dishes. There is not another housekeeper in the world so good as you. I have been at the Sultan's table; but there is no such cooking to tempt one there."

It was Mrs. Theresa's weak point to have her hospitality praised. She would deny no one food and drink, and even her bitterest enemy would not have been turned away hungry.

"Where are you living now," asked Theresa, as she was laying the table-cloth?

"In Trieste. I am agent of the leading shipbuilder."

"In Trieste?" interrupted Timar; "what is his name?"

"He builds ships," replied Theodore, disdainfully and sneeringly; "not scows and nut-shells. I refer to Signor Scamarelli."

Timar made no reply. He did not deem it necessary to disclose the fact that Signor Scamarelli was building a sea-going ship for him.

"Yes, I am just rolling in money, now-a-days," boasted Theodore. "Millions and millions go through my fingers constantly. And were I not a person of such clean, honest hands, I could shelve thousands for myself. I have also brought my little Naomi what I promised. What did I promise? A ring? Let me see; was it to be ruby, or emerald? Here is a diamond, weighing three and a-half carats, and it shall be my little girl's engagement ring."

Theodore fumbled about in his trousers' pockets for some

time, then made a frightened face, and with large eyes shouted at length, "Lost!" He turned his pockets inside out, to find the perfidious hole through which the valuable ring with its massive brilliant had been lost.

Naomi broke out into a clear laugh. She had a cheery silvery laugh, though one seldom heard it.

"Well, it is not lost after all. You need not be so amused;" and he drew off his boot. Sure enough, he struck the lost ring out of his boot leg upon the table.

"Mamma Theresa, your future son-in-law has brought this to his bride. What do you say to that? Herr Supercargo, are you a judge of diamonds? Take a look at this brilliant. What do you think it worth?"

Timar examined this specimen of magnificence, and said—

"Amongst ourselves, worth about a shilling."

"What indeed! You—a supercargo—what do you know about diamonds? You may understand corn-cobs and oat-meal well enough. Where would you be likely to see a diamond any way?"

Naomi pointedly refused to try on the defamed ring, so Theodore drew it on his own finger; and during the meal, which followed at once, the bejewelled hand played a very prominent part at the table.

The young man's appetite appeared to be, as usual, very good, almost insatiable. During the repast he expatiated on shipbuilding. He told how many million cubic feet of wood were yearly consumed at his shipyards; that there was scarcely a forest left containing the right kind of timber; and that it had to be imported from America.

Finally, his hunger was appeased, and he came to the point at once.

"And now, my dear Mother Theresa, I will tell you what actually brought me this time."

Theresa looked at him with a distrustful fear.

"One day Signor Scamarelli said to me, 'Look here, friend Kristyan, you must go to Brazil.'"

"If you had only gone!" sighed Mrs. Theresa.

Theodore surmised it, and smiled.

"For you know all the most valuable woods are to be found there. The purripou and patagou, from which the prow of the ship is formed; the mangrove and royoc, which never decay in water; the morts-aux-rats wood, whose odour

is sickening to wharf-rats; sandal wood, mahogany, cascarilla——”

“Do make an end of your senseless names,” interrupted Theresa. “If there are such desirable trees in Brazil, why do you not go after them?”

“Well, that is just my keen-sightedness. What I said to Scamarelli was this. Why should I go to Brazil, when I can find all the woods we need in our own neighbourhood. I know an island in the Danube, which has a native forest, and its old trees can compete in variety and quality with those of South America.”

“I thought so,” murmured Mrs. Theresa.

“The poplars replace the patagons, and the nut trees are every way superior to the rosewood and mahogany; and you know there are hundreds here upon our island.”

“My nut trees!”

“The apple trees serve more purposes than the cascarilla. The plum trees——”

“And you want to cut down my trees to sell them to Signor Scamarelli?” quietly asked Mother Theresa.

“You shall have your own price for every tree. Signor Scamarelli gave me unlimited authority to negotiate with you. The contract is in my pocket, which you have only to sign, and we are all made rich at once. And when once these useless trees are cut down, we will remove to Trieste. I will plant the island with prunas mehaleb, out of which, you know, they make the famous, sweetsmelling, Turkish bamboo pipe. These require no culture. And we can sell enough annually to furnish us a handsome income, with no effort on our part.”

Timar smiled. Here was an exhibition of dauntless speculation quite new to him.

“You need not grin,” snorted Theodore, angrily. “I understand my own business.”

Theresa took up the reply. “And I understand it too. Unhappily, when any errand brings you to us, you come like the shadow of death. I know you have some evil project on hand. Heretofore you have come in a row-boat, and carried off everything that we had provided for ourselves, and sold it. I have always let you have it, and may God bless it to you! Now you are no longer satisfied with the fruits, most of which you have had—you want to sell the very trees which bear

them: trees which are good and true friends; trees which I have planted and cared for with my own hands; from which I live, and under whose grateful shade I rest. - Go away; you ought to be ashamed. You have no idea of getting money for these trees. If cut down, they could be sold only at a beggarly price. Put an end to your foolish wit, or I will show you to what the Turkish bamboo is especially adapted."

"Now, Mother Theresa, I am not joking. Only think what a feast-day this is. It is my little Naomi's birthday, and my name-day. You know that our revered fathers arranged our engagement, and appointed that her seventeenth year should make us one. I should have come to you from the ends of the earth on this anniversary. And here I am, with my whole heart full of ardour. I have a good salary, it is true; but Naomi is your only child, and has a right to a dowry."

Naomi turned her back on the whole company, and sulkily leaned her forehead against the wall.

"You must do something for Naomi. You need not be so selfish. It makes no difference to me. Keep one-half the trees if you like, but the other half I demand as a marriage portion; I promise to be discreet in the sale of them: I am telling you the truth, I have a good customer."

Theresa's patience was exhausted.

"It may be your name-day, but it is not Naomi's birthday. And I am sure also that if you were the only man on earth, Naomi would never choose you for a husband."

"Leave that to me; that is my matter."

"Let it be yours then. I shall send you about your business without further ceremony. Not one of my splendid trees shall you have—even to construct a Noah's ark to save the world. Yes; you may have just one, which you may devote to the purpose that sooner or later will be your end."

Theodore rose, not to go, but to turn the chair in order to sit upon it astride, and to look Theresa impudently in the face as he leaned on both elbows.

"How very polite you are towards me, Mamma Theresa. Perhaps you have forgotten; I have only to say one word."

"Say it then. You can speak out in the presence of this gentleman. He virtually knows all."

"That this island is not yours."

"True."

"And it requires a mere memorandum from me, either at Vienna or Constantinople—"

"To make beggars and fugitives of us."

"Exactly so; that is what I can do!" said Theodore Kristyan, showing his real character now; and with a rapacious look in his eye, glaring at Theresa all the while, he drew from his pocket a paper, "And I shall do it if you do not sign your name to this contract at once."

Theresa trembled.

Michael Timar, who till now had been a silent listener, touched Theodore's shoulder gently, "You cannot do that, Sir."

"What?" asked he, throwing his head back wildly; "cannot do what?"

"You cannot inform the authorities of either country of the existence of this island, or that anyone has taken possession without leave or licence."

"And what is to hinder me?"

"Because it has already been done."

"By whom?"

"I have given the notice."

"You!" cried Theodore, doubling up his fist towards Timar.

"You!" shrieked Theresa, raising aggrieved both hands over her head.

"Yes. I gave notice, both in Vienna and at Constantinople, that a small nameless island had appeared next to the island of Ostrova, and which fifty years ago did not exist. At the same time I petitioned both the Austrian and Turkish Governments for a ninety years' use, or usufruct, as we say in law, of this new island. And as tributary to both, I covenanted to pay—to the one annually a sack of nuts, and to the other a case of preserved fruits. Just before I came here, I received the assent of both Governments—the patent as well as the firman."

Timar took from his pocket the two letters which he had received at Baja, and which gave him so much pleasure.

In the height of his prosperity, he was mindful of the fate of these persecuted, unprotected women, and had thoughtfully secured to them their peace of mind—though the yearly tribute of nuts and fruit was an expensive tax for him!

"I, of course, had my right and licence at once transferred to the present possessors and inhabitants. Here is the official charter, Mrs. Theresa."

Theresa, perfectly speechless, sank down at Timar's feet. She could only sob and kiss his hand, for he had freed her from a danger that threatened her by day, and haunted her by night. Naomi held both her hands pressed against her heart, lest it should leap to her lips.

"And now, Theodore Kristyan," continued Timar, "you may be assured and convinced that, for the next ninety years, you have no further business on this island."

Kristyan had turned pale with anger, and, gnashing his teeth, he cried—

"But who are you? What right have you to meddle with the affairs of this family?"

"The right, because I love him!" called out Naomi, and, giving full vent to her feelings, she fell on Timar's breast, and folded both arms tightly about his neck.

Theodore said not another word. In dumb rage he menaced Timar with his fists, and stalked out of the room. But in his parting glance lay the threat of revenge that suggests weapons or poison.

The girl remained hanging about Timar's neck.

CHAPTER V.

OUT OF THE WORLD.

The maiden still clung to Timar's breast, even after the departure of the assailant from whom she had tried to shield him with her own person.

Why had she sprung to his arms? Why had she said, "I love him?"

Did she wish to drive away for ever the man whose presence made her shudder? Did she hope to render it impossible for Kristyan to want to make her his wife? This child of nature had no knowledge as to what custom demanded, or morals or modesty required of her. She knew nothing of the social laws concerning the relations of men and women which Church and State have so rigidly enacted.

Gratitude was mixed with the love which she felt in her heart for this man, who had freed her mother and herself from a perpetual care; who had secured this little paradise

to them as a home so long as they should live; and who had taken so much trouble for them, and given so much thought to them.

Was she frightened when she saw the threatening gesture of her persecutor? Did she involuntarily fling herself on the breast of her benefactor, to shield him from danger? Did she think of the poor shipping-clerk, whose mother had been as poor as her own? If he had nobody, as he himself had told her, to care for him, should she not be a somebody to love him? Why had he returned to the island, unless attracted there by something subtle and sweet; and if *he* loved *her*, why should she not love him in return?

No; there is no explanation, no apology, no reason for her act, but pure, true love.

She knew not why or wherefore, but she loved. She did not know whether it was right, whether God and man permitted it, whether joy or sorrow would come of it; she only loved. She was not thinking that she would be happy and proud to be the wife of this man, and crowned with the silver crown, or blessed in the Name of the Trinity. She loved. She had no thought of protecting herself against the world and its judgments. She did not, with bowed head, think of apologies. She was not eager for the protection of a husband, the favour of men, or the grace of God. She had but one thought—she loved.

Such was Naomi. Poor Naomi! How much suffering you are preparing for yourself!

For the first time in his life Timar knew that he was loved—loved for love's sake—loved though a poor man—loved for himself alone. A strange, burning emotion thrilled him in every nerve. Such a fiery glow might wake the dead from their chilly sleep, and compel them to resurrection. He flung his arm round the girl, and pressed her to his heart, softly whispering to her, "Is it indeed true?"

And the maiden leaned her head on Timar's shoulder, and smiled in answer, that it was true.

Timar looked at Theresa.

The mother came towards him, and laid her hand upon Naomi's head, as if she would say, "Love him, my child!"

It was a sacred moment, in which each could hear the other's heart beat.

Theresa first broke the silence.

"O, if you but knew how many tears this maiden has shed on your account! Had you seen her every day climbing up to the summit of this cliff, and looking out wistfully for hours toward that region which hid you from her sight! Had you heard how, in her dreams, she whispered your name!"

Naomi held out her hand imploringly toward her mother, as if to beg her not to betray her further.

But Timar drew the girl closer to his heart.

Here at last was a being who absolutely loved him—the man, and not his possessions. He felt like one who had been suddenly lifted out of the confines of the world, and who saw a new heaven and a new earth, in which he was to live a new life.

He stooped and kissed the girl on her forehead, and he felt her heart throb against his own. The world about him seemed full of blossoming thickets, incense-breathing flowers, the hum of bees, the singing of birds—all things teaching him one thing, "Love is yours!"

It was a silent, bewildering ecstasy. The bright sun and the fragrant earth seemed in a league to enchant the twain, and their new experience was an intoxication. A child who had never loved before, and a man who had never been loved, what wonder that they forgot all other things, when they found each other?

The sun went down; but their delirium continued. The evening came on, the moon rose, and Timar led Naomi to the top of the cliff, from which she had so often gazed after him with tearful eyes. Timar seated himself on the moss-grown rock, between the lavender bushes. Naomi sat beside him, leaning her golden-tressed head upon his arm, while her face grew bright in the moonlight. Theresa stood near, and smiled upon the pair. The silver moonbeams shed a soft splendour on the group; and a heavenly spirit seemed to say to Timar—

"This is all your own. You have found it for yourself. It has been given to you unconsciously. It is a free gift. You have already won all things worldly, but never before did you win love. Now you have gained that treasure of treasures. Take it; drain the cup to the bottom. You are a new man; for a man is a demi-god when a woman loves him. You are happy; you are beloved."

But a voice replied from within, "Are you not a thief?"

Naomi's kiss had led Timar into a new world. All the illusions of his youth, all his romantic dreams, sprang to life again. The cares of business had made life a desert around him. Suddenly chance had led him to an oasis, where he had found what he had hitherto sought in vain—a heart that loved him. The first feeling which overmastered him was a secret terror, a fear to grasp this new happiness. Should he accept, or fly from, this joy? Where is the god who could answer this question? The flowers answered from their fragrant calyxes, the insects answered in gentle murmurs, the birds answered in music from their nests; but no answer came from a human voice when he asked, "Shall I find a blessing or a curse if I listen to the throbbing of my heart?"

But Timar listened to the throbbing of his heart, which tempted him to look into Naomi's eyes. He forgot all the world when he looked into those eyes, in whose depths he saw a new world of beauty, joy, and earthly blessedness. Never before had any one loved him: he had dared once to hope for such a happiness, and had toiled to gain it, only to find his hopes blasted, and his vision of joy a cruel mirage. And now at last he was beloved. Lips, eyes, and blushes, all revealed to him the secret of Naomi's heart. The mother of the girl understood it also, and had said to him, "She loves you! and she loves you so much that she might die of her love!"

"But she shall not die!" thought Timar, half aloud.

Timar spent a day on the island, which was like an eternity, full of unspeakable bliss. It was a day of self-forgetfulness, a waking dream—a dream in which all happened which the dreamer desired.

But after the third night spent in this way, as he went to his bed, in the moonlight, the inner voice, which never was to be silenced, repeated once again the harsh questions—

"What are you doing here? You are stealing, deceiving, murdering! The world has driven a poor woman out of its life, has taken everything from her, has banished her with her little child to a desert island. Then you come here to rob this woman of her last and only treasure. You bring misery, curses, and death to her last refuge. You are worse than all who have made her wretched before. You destroy a mother's

peace of mind, and you steal the heart of her innocent child. You are mad! Fly at once from this place!"

These thoughts pursued Timar all night long, and drove sleep from his eyes. Dawn found him under the trees. He had decided. He was resolved to go away, and never to return, until at least he had been forgotten—until he, too, had forgotten that for three days he had hoped to find happiness for himself also. Before the sun rose, he had walked around the little island. Returning from his wanderings, he found Theresa and her daughter busy in laying the table for breakfast.

"I must go away to-day!" said Timar.

"So soon!" sighed Naomi.

"He has work to do!" said Theresa to her child.

"Yes; I must go back to the ship."

This seemed but natural. The supercargo is only a servant who must toil for others. He has no right to the time for which his employer pays him. So they did not urge him to remain. It was in the order of affairs that he must go—leaving the women to wait till his return—a year, perhaps two, perhaps longer.

Naomi could not taste her coffee, since Timar had spoken of his departure. She knew that she ought not try to detain him. If he had duties, he must perform them.

Theresa brought him his gun and his powder pouch.

"Is the gun loaded?" she asked, anxiously.

"No," he replied.

"It would be well to load it, then. The meadows are not safe. There are wolves about, and sometimes worse beasts."

And she gave him no peace till he had loaded his gun, and strewed powder on the lock, for at that time there were no percussion caps.

Then Theresa said to Naomi—

"Carry the gun yourself, so that Almirus will not be excited, and go with Timar to the boat."

Theresa did not accompany the pair, but lingered alone among the roses.

Timar and Naomi walked on hand in hand, and in silence.

Suddenly Naomi stood still. Timar did the same, and looked into her eyes. "Do you wish to say anything to me?" he asked.

"No," said the girl, hesitatingly.

But Timar could read her eyes. He understood her mute question. She wished to say—

“Tell me, my beloved, my blessed one, my delight, what has become of that pale maiden, who was here with you once before, and whose name was Timea?”

But she did not speak, and walked on silently, hand in hand with Timar.

His heart sank, when he had to part with her. As the maiden gave the gun to him, she whispered—

“Take care that no harm befalls you.”

She pressed his hand, and looked into his face with eyes full of tenderness and shining like stars, and said to him, in soft, imploring tones—

“You will come back again?”

Her tone intoxicated him. Once again he pressed her to his heart, and said softly, “Why do you say, ‘You will return again?’ Call me THOU!”

The girl cast down her eyes, and shook her head.

“Only say Thou!” repeated Timar.

The girl hid her face on his breast, and said nothing.

“Wilt thou not say this little syllable for me? Art thou afraid?”

The girl covered her face with her hands, and was still silent.

“Naomi, I beg thee to say the little word, and make me happy. Whisper it—breathe it in my ear. But do not let me go with it unsaid.”

The girl shook her head, but would not repeat the tender “Thou.”

“God be with *you*!” said Timar, and sprang into his boat.

The reeds of the marshes soon hid the little island from view. Yet as long as he could see the thickets, he saw the maiden also. She stood leaning against an acacia tree, her cheek resting upon her hand, looking sorrowfully after him. But no word escaped her lips. Not even “Thou.”

CHAPTER VI.

TIMAR'S TEMPTATION.

Rowing over to the other side of the river, Timar gave his boat in charge of a fisherman till he should return.

Would he ever return?

It was his intention to go on foot to the place where Fabula was engaged in loading his vessel. It was no easy matter to row against the tide, and he was not in a humour just now for violent gymnastics.

Buried in thought, he sauntered through the cane-brake, along the bank of the river, with his gun hanging over his shoulder by means of a strap. He soliloquised thus to himself—

“You must not, you dare not come back to Naomi again. It is hard enough to carry one perpetual lie through life, without adding a second. Be a man, and come to your senses. You are no longer a boy, that this passion should make game of you. Perhaps it is not a real passion, after all—it is a momentary wish, or, worse yet, vanity. You are flattered, because a young girl, much desired by a handsome though worthless fellow, discards *him*, throws herself into your arms, and cries, ‘I love you, only you!’ You can still your pride with the reflection that she does not love this Kristyan, handsome though he be;—for he is a good-for-nothing. *You* she deifies; but if she could know what you actually are, a deceiver, and a thief too, only more successful than your rival, would she love you then?

“And what will the result be to you and to her, if you accept this love? You must divide your life into two distinct relations, and live a double existence. Do you want to

chain your fate in two places? Carry jealousy back and forth? Fear for your love on the island—fear for your honour and reputation in Komorn?

“Your wife does not love you; yet you know she is as true to you as an angel. If you suffer, she suffers too; but it will be your fault, only yours. You stole her property, her freedom; and now you rob her also of the fidelity you pledged her.

“But she may never know it, so she may never be pained by a loss she does not feel. You spend more than half the year away now. Your extensive business arrangements always furnish excellent excuses for absence. But what about poor, sweet, confiding Naomi? You cannot play on *her* heartstrings in this cruel way.

“She is no ordinary creature; she loves you devotedly; her body and soul are yours. How can you ever help her out of the misery into which this may bring her? If heaven should see fit to lay upon her shoulders the duties of motherhood, what would become of your offspring, whom you would value more than your life, but whom human conventionalities would prevent your acknowledging before the world?

“There is another thorn in your flesh. How is that discarded Theodore to be disposed of? He is a hot-headed adventurer, who would not pause at one sin more or less.

“He is capable of following you everywhere, and threatening your peace of mind always. He must be got rid of at all hazards. . . . Yes, *you*, Fortune’s favourite, whom everybody honours, and points to as an example of virtue, and a benefactor of mankind, you deliberately plan a scheme to trap your enemy—a scheme which ought to bring you to the gallows.”

Timar wiped his burning brow with his handkerchief. He had worked himself into a fever of excitement. He took off his hat to let the soft spring breeze cool his hot temples.

There was a strong effort within him to vindicate his motives to his conscience.

“Am I never to have any pleasure in this life? Nearly forty years old, I rise early, and toil all day. What for? That others may rest in peace! And am I never to have any peace? Why is my own life joyless? Am I then so unworthy of my wife’s love? I offered her my whole heart; it was spurned, and through her coldness I sank into a hopeless despair.

"I took her possessions? It is not true.

"I saved them for *her*. If I had put that bag into Braso-witsch's hands, the whole cargo might as well have been sunk for all the good it would ever have been to her. It is all her own again. How am I a thief? Naomi loves me. I cannot help that. She has always loved me, without any effort on my part. It would be driving her to endless distress, if I deserted her. The only source of true happiness to me is on this island—which belongs to no Government—where shortsighted man has made no law. Here alone, out of the world, a man may give himself up to his natural impulses.

"And this imbecile fellow, who stands between me and my unsought love, my right—why should he cause me uneasiness? All he wants is money. I have that. I pay him handsomely, and he disappears for ever. Why need I fear him?"

Near the ravine stood a hut, constructed of plaited bamboo. The door was hidden by bramble bushes. Being near a human habitation, Timar dried his forehead, and replaced his hat.

His conscience took up the argument.

"It is true that you have now no pleasure on earth; your life is cold and barren. But be comforted. When you lay your head upon your pillow, though you may think another joyless day gone, you will remember that it was at least a day well spent, in which no human being was wronged."

And his evil genius of contradiction answered, "Who says that loving is sin, and that long-suffering self-denial is virtue?"

"Has anyone ever seen the two angels that sit, one on the right hand of the Judge, and the other on the left? Is there any proof that the one records the names of those who suffer and waste till death unsatisfied, while the other mercilessly inscribes in the black book all who love and dare to meet bliss half-way, despite the consequences?"

Two shots crackled out of the neighbourhood somewhere, and two bullets whizzed over Timar's head; while, pierced by the shots, his hat landed in the bushes beyond.

For a moment Timar's limbs were benumbed with fright; the two balls were the answer to his secret thoughts. The next moment his self-possession returned. The firing had come

from the hut. He tore his gun from his shoulder, and ran where the cloud of smoke was still visible. Just where his gun pointed stood a man, trembling in every limb. It was Theodore Kristyan; the discharged double-barrelled pistol was in his hand.

"It was you, then? You?"

"Mercy!" Theodore cried, throwing his weapon down. His face was pale; his eye had no more light in it. He was half dead.

Timar came to himself. Fright and anger were gone. He, too, dropped his gun.

"Come nearer," he said to the would-be assassin.

"I dare not!" he shrieked, in a coward-like tone. "You will kill me!"

"You need not be afraid;" and with that he sent the contents of his firearm into the air.

Theodore slowly shuffled out of the hut.

"Theodore Kristyan, you are young yet, and are willing to be my murderer! You have not succeeded. Let me give you some advice. Turn over a new leaf. You were not born bad, I am sure; but circumstances have made you so. I know the history of your life. I can save you. You have fine talents, which you are employing very unprofitably. You are a vagabond, and a cheat. You cannot be happy so; that is impossible. Begin a new life. Shall I find you a place where you can honourably improve and grow? I have many business relations. I can do it, if you will let me. Your hand on it, like a man!"

Kristyan fell on his knees before the man whose blood a moment earlier he wanted to spill, and grasping the offered hand, sobbed—

"O, Sir, you are really the first man who ever spoke so kindly to me. From my childhood I have been driven from one door to another, like a dog without an owner. Every mouthful I have had has been gained only through cheating, stealing, or flattering. No one has reached a friendly hand to me, except those who were worse than I; and they did it to lead me astray. My manner of life has been dishonourable and disgusting. You are willing to take the hand of him who has watched for your return, with murder in his heart. You wish to free me from myself. On bended knee I await your command."

"Stand up ! I have no love for sentimentality. Men's tears are always suspicious."

"You are right," said Kristyan ; "especially my tears, for I have always played the comedian, and could cry to order for a groschen. And when I weep in reality, no one believes me."

"Listen to me," said Timar. "I am not going to read you a moral lesson, but shall talk with you about a dry business concern. You spoke of connections with the banking-house of Scamarelli, and your probable Brazilian voyage."

"There was not a word of it true."

"I know it. You have nothing to do with that house."

"I had, but the relations have been severed."

"Were you cashiered, or did you run away ?"

"I fled."

"With money entrusted to you ?"

"With three or four hundred florins."

"Let us say five hundred. Have you a mind to return this sum to Scamarelli ? I can manage it for you."

"I would not like to stay with him."

"Hm ! I know a very good place for you in Brazil, as agent for a new enterprise, where a knowledge of European languages is requisite."

"I can speak and write several."

"I am aware of that fact. You are a man of genius. This position will call in demand your best faculties. It will pay you, to start with, three thousand thalers a year, with a further percentage if you increase the business."

Theodore had so long played the actor, that he was afraid to show the gratitude he actually felt, lest it might be misunderstood.

"Do you really mean this, Herr Timar ?"

"I have no cause to jest with you. I must insure my life. You wish to shoot me. If I can make a good man of you, I can roam the woods in safety. What I say is in self-defence. To prove to you that I am thoroughly in earnest, here is my pocket-book ; you will find money enough in it to pay your travelling expenses to Trieste, and enough to pay back Scamarelli. By the time you reach Trieste, Scamarelli will have received my letter ; he will tell you what else there is to do. Now one of us can go to the right, and the other to the left."

The pocket-book trembled in Theodore's hand. Timar picked up his perforated hat, and started to leave his new *protégé*.

"If I ever come in your way again, shoot me like a dog!" and with these words, Kristyan forced his empty pistol into Timar's hands. "Shoot me with my own pistol!" And he gave Timar no peace till he took the proffered weapon.

"God be with you!" said Timar, and left Kristyan standing half dazed.

* * * * *

Poor little Naomi remained for hours under the acacia tree where Timar had bade her farewell. Theresa came, after a time, to coax her into the house. She did not succeed; so she took her knitting, and seated herself on the grass.

Suddenly Naomi spoke out.

"Did you hear those two shots on the other shore, mother?"

They listened. Silence reigned everywhere.

"Two again! Mother, what is that?"

Theresa comfortingly tried to quiet her—"Hunters are shooting over there, my child." Still Naomi grew as pale as the acacia blossoms over her head, and, holding her hand on her heart, she stammered, "No, no; he will never come back again!" And now the pain in her heart increased, till her eyes overflowed at the remembrance that she had refused his last wish—refused to say that little word "Thou!" He had begged so for it!

* * * * *

"Johann Fabula," said Timar to his faithful steward, "we have a new market for our grain."

"What now?"

"We will have it ground on the spot. We must rent thirty mills. These, together with the two on our property, will help us do the business."

"We shall require an extraordinary market to sell that amount of flour."

"That is easily found. It is to be transported to Trieste by way of Karlsburg. At that port my ship will be ready to receive it, to carry it to Brazil."

"To Brazil," cried Fabula, frightened; "but I cannot take it there!"

"I have not the slightest intention of sending you there with it. It is your duty only to know that it is properly

ground, sacked, and shipped for Trieste. I have provided the proper person for its exportation."

"I thank you humbly," said Fabula, and hung his head, as he withdrew from Baronet Levetinczy's bureau.

"That will be the craziest scheme yet!" he said, when well out of his master's hearing. "To send flour from Hungary to Brazil, where bread hangs upon trees! Coals to Newcastle! His flour will be musty before it can be landed there. Nobody will pay him his price for it. He never will see his money again. Yet everybody will expect the ship back loaded with gold dust. It is a crazy performance truly!"

Timar risked on this mission about a hundred thousand florins. It was no new fancy of his. He had long thought of establishing international commerce in cereal products; but his vague plans would not have so definitely taken shape except for one reason. Naomi was the sole cause. If Timar had not met Theodore Kristyan, he might have been satisfied for a long time to come with his domestic trade. Grain exportation was only a secondary consideration; the principal thing with Timar was to put a hemisphere and an ocean between himself and this fellow. The dexterity, energy, and enthusiasm he evinced in this work was something marvellous. He travelled day and night, superintended all the loadings himself, and directed every employé personally. "A perfect pattern of a business man!" everybody exclaimed.

If the world could have known what prompted this effort!

In three weeks the cargo was ready for sailing from Trieste. This was done under the patronage of the firm of Scamarelli. Timar had a reason why he did not wish his name openly connected with the Brazilian venture.

One day he received a letter from Theodore Kristyan, which to his surprise contained a hundred florin note. The letter was as follows:—

"MY FATHER,

"By the time you receive this letter I shall be on the high seas, on board the splendid ship Pannonia, as Brazilian agent for the house of Scamarelli. I offer you most fervent thanks for your kind recommendation. I have been paid two months in advance. I send you herewith one hundred gulden, which I beg you will kindly carry to the landlord of 'The White Ship,' in Pancsova. I owe this

poor man that amount, for my board in his house. Please pay it to him, with my thanks. May Heaven bless you for your goodness to me!"

Timar breathed easier. The man had improved. He remembered an old debt, and paid it unasked from his first earnings.

What a feeling of satisfaction to have won to honour and manhood a lost soul!

"To save an enemy who has threatened one's life, to convert a cheat into an honest man, to cleanse a pearl that has been trampled in filth, is a deed worthy of an angel. Thou art a noble soul!"

If only the still small voice from within had not added, in an accusing tone, "You are a murderer! You rejoice, not that you have freed this man from his vices, but that you are rid of him yourself. You would rejoice yet more, could you but know that the ship, cargo, and agent, lay buried at the bottom of the Atlantic. Your loss of the flour would be light compared to your gain in being delivered from that disagreeable presence. Or he may fall a victim to yellow fever, which lies in wait for every new arrival, and sixty out of a hundred fall helplessly before the dread monster. You wish that he may be one of the sacrifices. You are a cowardly murderer!"

From that day Timar was a changed man. One would hardly recognise him. He became possessed with a strange restlessness. He gave orders which he almost immediately countermanded, or which he forgot an hour later. He started on a ride, and turned about again when half way on his journey. He neglected important matters. He could be seen for hours in a brown study, in some lonely spot on the river bank. At another time he would quarrel with an underling for some slight cause. Letters forwarded from all parts of the kingdom would lie unopened on his table.

He thought of nothing but the golden-haired Naomi, as he left her on the strand, leaning one arm on the acacia tree, and her sorrowful head bent upon the other.

One day he decided to go back to her; the next, he determined to forget her.

He grew superstitious, and looked for some sign from heaven. His dreams should decide.

O, what dream-pictures! They only brought him the same innocent face, happy and suffering, resigned and lost. His visions made him frantic.

Finally, one afternoon he determined to return to his sober senses and normal condition, and to plunge headlong into his business again; this would quench his vain aspirations and hopeless longings. He seated himself before the neglected pile of letters, and began to open one after another. It was with difficulty that he commanded his thoughts, so long had they been beyond his control.

Suddenly his heart beat, as he picked up one, whose handwriting gave him a start. It was Timea's. A chill went shivering through his veins. Here was the heaven-sent sign!

This letter would decide the long-fought battle with his soul.

She had written. She, his pure, true wife; and every one of her tender words would strengthen her husband's wavering spirit, and awaken him from his intoxication to life and duty once more!

There is something heavy in the letter, perhaps some surprise. Why, to be sure, to-morrow would be Timar's birthday; and this sweet, pale woman reminds her long-absent husband that home, and, may be, love, are waiting for him.

Timar carefully broke the seal.

He was startled. The key of his writing-desk dropped out. The letter was short:—

“MY DEAR SIR,

“In the drawer of your writing-table you left your key. Lest its loss should cause you uneasiness, I forward it herewith. God bless you. “TIMEA.”

That was all.

Timar had left his key the night of his secret return and interview with Athalie. Nothing but this key! nothing but these few, cold, heartless words! Timar laid the letter down, disappointed, and out of humour.

A thought struck him.

If Timea found the key in the drawer, it is possible that she examined the contents of the drawer. And an investigation would reveal to her some familiar articles. When Timar converted Ali Tschorbadschi's treasures into money, he was cautious enough to keep back a few special pieces, which might have led to the discovery of his act. He disposed of all the diamonds. But there was a medallion inlaid with precious stones, that contained the

portrait of a beautiful young Greek woman, whose features noticeably resembled Timea's. In all probability it was her mother. Should Timea find this, she would recognise the picture, and know everything; she then would surmise how all her father's valuables had fallen into Timar's hands; how her husband became a rich man, and how he purchased her with the price of her own wealth.

If Timea had been inquisitive, she knew all, and must despise her husband.

And did not the letter indicate as much? Did she not take this means of informing him that she had full knowledge of all the past?

This thought decided Timar, whether he should go up or down stream. He was unmasked before his wife; he could not play the benefactor—the magnanimous man—to Timea any more. He felt the scorn of her eyes, miles away. He could not face her gaze; and so he decided to return to the island.


But he did not wish to withdraw from the field as vanquished. He wrote to Timea to open all letters which came during his continued absence; and, when necessary, to advise with his lawyers and agents. He conferred upon her full power to collect, endorse, and receipt. At the same time, he returned the key of his private table to her, lest she might require certain documents preserved there.

That was his trump card. He had taken the initiative in disclosing his secret, when he felt suspicion pointed that way.

He communicated with his several agents, giving orders, and telling each that he was going on an extended tour, but omitted to state the direction. All future letters were to be addressed to his wife.

Late in the afternoon he left Levetinczy, in a peasant's wagon.

Two or three days previously he had been superstitious and hopeful, expecting from heaven, or from the elements, a sign to guide him in the direction he should go. Now he decided for himself, and deliberately moved towards the island. He went the ways that man goes, when he no longer seeks heavenly guidance. Naomi attracted him; Timea repelled him. The positive and negative poles of his passion!



At evening, a pale red cloud moved towards the traveller; it increased in size as it approached the horses.

The driver first prayed, then swore in very unclassic Hungarian—"There are those damnable gnats!"

The horses were completely enveloped—ears, eyes, and nostrils. Maddened by millions of stings, they became uncontrollable; and Timar jumped from the wagon.

The affrighted animals and driver were far out of sight before he collected himself. He happily was left sound, with not a bone broken. He had forgotten his large bag and gun. He cut a willow stick, which should serve a twofold purpose—help him through the wood, and be a means of defence.

He wandered for a time, and lost his way. Before he was aware, midnight overtook him. The farther he went, the thicker grew the forest. He could find no clue to a road. He came at last to a small empty hut covered with reeds. He made up his mind to spend the night in it. He gathered pieces of brushwood, and kindled a fire. Luckily, his lunch-bag was still strapped on his shoulder, containing some bread and bacon. Also something else, which he had forgotten: it was the double-barrelled pistol that Theodore Kristyan had discharged at him—perhaps on this very spot.

The pistol was of no use, for Timar's powder had been left in the wagon. Still, the sight of the weapon inspired confidence. It was a dreadful place.

Soon the howl of wolves could be heard. Timar could distinguish their shining green eyes in the bushes; at intervals he was thrilled by their roaring, when they neared the hut.

Timar did not dare to let the fire go out during the night. The bright light kept the wild animals at a distance. He was afraid to go into the interior of the hut; he mustered up courage two or three times, but was driven back by the frightful hissing of snakes.

What a night! Think of a man who had a home, a comfortable bed, and a beautiful young wife, yet spending such a night alone on the threshold of a mouldy hut, overgrown with mushrooms! The wolves howled all about him, and on every side crawled slimy snakes!

And this day was his birthday! What an agreeable anniversary!

Yet he chose it for himself.

Timar had a fervent, religious nature. From his childhood, night and morning he had said his prayers. It had been his only comfort. In whatever danger, misery, or sorrow he had to encounter, he lifted up his heart to the God in whom he devoutly believed, and commended his soul and body to the care of his Father in Heaven. The strength from above never failed him; and whatsoever he touched, prospered.

On this awful night he did not attempt a prayer. From this birthday onward, he would never pray again. He defied his fate.

As the gray morning dawned, the beasts of the night withdrew into the depths of the wood. Timar started, and discovered a ravine which led to the Danube.

Here another terror stared him in the face. The Danube had risen, and overflowed its banks.

It was in the spring of the year, and the snow had melted. The yellow, slimy waves were covered with roots and loosened willow branches. The fisherman's hut, which Timar sought (for he had left his boat there), and which he supposed to be situated on a hill, was submerged up to its entrance; and the boat was tied to a tree. He found no one in the cottage.

Surely a sign from heaven, and a revelation to return! No one would go down the river at such a time.

"No," said Timar, grown stubborn and rebellious; "I have chosen, and shall abide by my decision."

The door of the hut was locked. He forced it open; for he could see through the chinks that his rudder and oars were there.

He seated himself in the skiff, tied his feet with his handkerchief to the rudder-box, loosed the rope, and pushed out.

The Danube was angry and raging—tearing trees from the roots, and carrying them down stream. The boat danced hither and yon like a nutshell; and the wind was constantly blowing him back toward the hut whence he started. But Timar was indifferent to wind and wave. He would accept no monitions now, from the powers above or below. His cap fell off to his feet; the perspiration poured from his forehead; the spray dashed into his face. The thought that perhaps

Naomi was in danger on the little island kept him warm. He gave no rest to his arms.

The Danube and the wind are mighty powers, but human passion and human will are mightier. Timar was revealed to himself. What an elasticity lived in his arm, what a strong will in his heart! It was almost superhuman, as, against both elements, he pulled around the neck of the island of Ostrova.

Here he could rest.

But he did not stop long. Gaining the other side, he found No Man's Land covered with sedge, and only the tops of the trees visible. His impatience grew more feverish with every stroke of the oar, although each motion brought him nearer the alien rock, covered at its top with lovely blue lavender.

Now he could see the fruit trees, whose trunks stood in water. Further on, the flower-garden was dry, and the goats and sheep were huddled together there. Almirus's joyful bark greeted him. The black beast ran to the water, plunged in, and escorted Timar back.

There, at the base of the jasmine, stood the rosy-cheeked girl, the water creeping gradually nearer and nearer. She saw Timar. He sprang from the boat; and the waves carried it out of reach before he could turn. What matter! He had no more need of it! And the lovers were in each other's arms!

"Thou didst come back! thou, thou dear one! thou!"

Paradise was all around them. Over their heads the fragrant jasmine spread its silver leaves; and the choir of finches and nightingales sang "Gospodi Pomilui."

CHAPTER VII.

SWEET HOME.

The waves had long ago carried away the boat on which the inhabitants of the island had gone thither, and the exiles had bought no new one. They could not leave the spot until the first purchasers of fruit should again come. And it would be weeks and months before that time. Happy weeks and months! Unnumbered days, and cloudless enjoyment!

No Man's Land was Timar's "home." He there found occupation and rest. After the overflow had subsided, he busied himself in draining the pools left on the island. He was engaged all day long in digging canals. His hands were as rough as a day-labourer's, but when he came back at night to the little cabin with his spade on his shoulder, he was looked for from afar, and received with a warm welcome. The two women had wished to help him in this toil, but Timar had refused, saying that domestic duties alone belonged to them, the breaking of ground being a man's work. And when he saw his ditches, through which the standing water was drained off the island, he was as proud of his achievement as if this were the best and only work of his life. The opening of the canals was a fête-day. They had no Church festivals; they did not reckon by Sundays. Their fête-days were those on which God had bestowed upon them especial joys and blessings. The dwellers on the island were not given to much talking. What David said in the 150th Psalm they echoed with a sigh; and what the sacred poet said of love, they repeated to each other, only in an exchange of glances. They had learned to read each other's thoughts in each other's faces; and they had learned that each understood and shared the other's feelings as well as thoughts.

Day by day Timar was more surprised by Naomi. She was

a faithful and true soul, free from moods or caprices. She had no care, no worry about the future. She was happy herself, and made others happy. And never did she ask him, "What is to become of me, when you go away? Will you leave me here, or take me with you? Have others any claims upon you? What place do you hold in that outside world in which you live?"

Neither in her eyes nor from her lips did any question escape her, save only, "Dost thou love me?"

Sometimes Mother Theresa said to Timar that she feared he might be neglecting his duties. But Timar reassured her, telling her that Johann Fabula would attend to all that was necessary; and when Theresa looked at Naomi, whose eyes followed Timar as the sunflower follows the sun, the mother whispered joyfully—

"How tenderly the child loves him!"

It was well for Timar to be busy all day in digging ditches, making paths, and trimming hedges. This physical toil helped him to conquer in his mental conflicts.

What was going on in the outside world?

Thirty of his ships floated on the Danube, and a squadron upon the seas; his whole fortune, millions in various sorts of property, which was all in the hands of one woman. If now this woman, in foolish expenditure, should fling this fortune to the winds, or waste it in wild schemes of investment, she would make this man and his mercantile house bankrupt. Could he reproach her for this? And yet might it not so happen?

His soul had two habitations, and was tossed and torn in two opposite directions. Yonder were his worldly duties, his wealth, and his honour. Yet love held him here, away from them all. He could easily have gone back. The Danube was not wide here, and he was a good swimmer; and no one would have complained had he said he must leave the island. The women well knew he had work to do in the world. But when he looked at Naomi, he forgot all things else on the earth. He remembered only his love; he was happy here, and he was intoxicated with the delirium of his happiness.

"Oh, love me less, darling!" sighed Naomi sometimes; and thus passed day after day.

The time of harvest came on. The fruit trees were weighed down to the ground by their sweet burden. It was a pleasant

sight to see the changes in the ripening fruit. The pears and apples began to take on their various colours, according to their varieties. And in their green, golden, or rosy hues they smiled out from the branches like the face of a smiling child.

Timar helped the women to gather the fruit—great baskets heaped with the luscious treasure; each precious, and worth its weight in coin.

One morning, as he was assisting Naomi to carry a basketful of pears, he saw the fruit-dealers, who had come from the mainland to buy.

They were the first men whom he had seen for months, the first who could bring him any news from the outside world. They bargained with Mother Theresa for the fruit, in the usual huckstering fashion. Theresa, as was her wont, wanted to exchange her crop for wheat; but the dealers were unwilling to give her as much as in former years. They said grain had risen greatly in price; Komorn merchants had been buying it up, and so it had advanced. These merchants ground it, and sent the flour into foreign countries.

Mother Theresa hardly believed this: she thought it was only the ordinary talk of buyers. But Timar understood it well. This was *his* work. What was coming out of his scheme? He could not rest longer. Cares about his business began to disturb his mind. This news was to him, what the trumpet-call is to an idle soldier. He must tear himself from the arms of the beloved one, and hasten to the battle-field. The women thought it quite natural that Timar should decide that he must leave the island for a time. His duties called him, and he would return to them in the spring. Naomi only asked of him not to throw away the clothes which she had spun, woven, and made for him, and which he had worn on the island.

"I want you to keep them to remember *you* by!" she said. "And *thou* wilt think sometimes of thy poor Naomi!"

He could not answer her in words. He begged the fruit-buyers to stay one day longer on the island. And all that day he spent with Naomi, wandering about to the various spots where they had passed so many happy hours; visiting each thicket which had been witness of their joys. Here he plucked a leaf, there a blossom, to take with him as a memento. On these petals and leaflets were enchanting tales written, which only two people could understand.

"Wilt thou love me, even if I am long separated from thee?"

So they questioned each other mutely, as they looked in each other's eyes. Swiftly sped this last day. The merchants wished to embark at evening, so as to row back in the cool of the day. Timar must say farewell.

Naomi was self-controlled; she did not weep. She knew that Timar would return. She was absorbed in seeing that he had everything necessary for his journey. "It will be night when you reach the opposite shore," she said; "have you your gun with you?"

"No. No one will do me any harm."

"Yet—there is a pistol in your pocket," said Naomi; and she took it out, and looked at it curiously.

She turned pale.

She recognised the pistol of Theodore Kristyan, with which he had often threatened and alarmed her on his visits, and boasted that he would kill the dog Almirus.

"That was *his* weapon!"

Timar evaded Naomi's questioning look.

"When you went away from here," said she, "*he* was in ambush on the shore yonder, and fired at you!"

"Why do you think so?"

"I heard his two shots, and then yours in return. It is true! You took this from him!"

Timar was amazed. How those who love can see even invisible things! He could not deceive her.

"Did you kill him?" asked the girl.

"No."

"What did you do to him?"

"Do not be troubled about him. He has gone to Brazil. Half the globe lies between us."

"I would rather three feet of earth separated him from us," cried Naomi passionately, pressing Timar's hand.

Timar looked into the maiden's face in astonishment.

"You! you! With such murderous thoughts! You, who can kill nothing, not even crush a spider under foot, or pin a butterfly on a wall!"

"But if any one should take you from me I could kill him, whether he were a ghost, man, or devil!"

And she flung her arms about her lover, and pressed him to her heart.

He trembled and glowed with love's own fire.

BOOK IV.

N A O M I.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY JEWELS.

Timar went to the fisher's cabin on the opposite shore. His head was full of two things. One was the real picture which he had seen vanishing in the last evening's twilight—the moss-grown rock in the middle of the Danube, on whose summit a slender figure had waved him a farewell with her handkerchief as long as he could be seen; but the other was the creation of his fancy—the wonder how he would find matters going on at his house in Komorn. And he had time enough to think of this during his long journey from the Lower Danube to his home.

When the old fisherman saw Timar, he began to grumble—[for fishermen never swear!]

“Sir, during the overflow some thief stole your boat, and broke into the hut, and took off the oars also. Oh, what rascally knaves there are in this world!”

It did Timar good to be called a thief to his face. It was true. Oh, if he had but stolen only a boat!

“After all,” said he to the fisherman, “don't let us curse the scamp. Who knows what great need he may have had of the boat. We can soon get another. But now, my good old fellow, take your boat, and see if you can't row me to the harbour to-night.”

For a considerable sum of money the trip was settled upon; and by daylight they reached the bay where the vessels were usually loaded.

Timar wished no one to know where he had been, or whence he had come. At the hotel he engaged a coachman

to drive him to Levetinczy, and on the way he decided to go to the Mayor's, to find out what had happened during the last five months. For he had spent this long time on the island.

In Levetinczy he went to the one-storied house, in one wing of which the old Mayor and his wife lived, while the other was occupied by Timar himself when in town. From this a staircase led into the former park, where there was a chamber which Timar used for his office.

Timar had to think out a plausible lie to account for his long absence. As he had been five months away, a journey of course must be his excuse. But in his travelling-bag he had nothing but the coarse clothes which Naomi had made for him. It was necessary to make himself presentable, and if he could go to his office in the park, as he had the key with him, he could change his clothing, and then go to call on the Mayor.

His plan succeeded. Nobody met him. He slipped up the stairs to his office; but as he put his key into the lock, he found another key in it on the inside. Someone must be in the office! And here were all his papers, and his ledgers and account-books. No one had a right to enter this place. Who could the intruder be? He opened the door quickly, and entered the room. Now indeed it was his turn to be frightened. Before his desk sat a person whom he had not the least desire to see.

It was Timea!

A ghost would have been less startling to him than this slight figure, with the pale face and calm expression, who at his entrance rose from the desk, and laid down the pen which she had held in her hand.

His great ledger lay before her, and she had been working on it.

A whirl of conflicting emotions overcame Timar. Alarm that he must confront his wife first on his return; pleasure that he found her alone; and amazement that she was at work on his account-books.

Timea, surprised at his entrance, looked up at Timar, then silently approached him, and held out her hand to him.

This pale woman had always been a mystery to Timar. He could never read her thoughts. Did she know everything? What was hidden under her cold and indifferent manner?

Was it the mask of contempt, or unrequited love? Or was it merely the result of her lymphatic temperament?

He did not know what to say to Timea.

But she appeared as if she did not notice the disorder of his garments. Women know how to see things without looking at them.

"I am glad that you have come at last," said Timea, in her quiet voice. "I have expected you every day. You will find your clothes in the next room, and when you are dressed I wish you would come back here."

And with these words she stuck the pen in her mouth. Timar kissed his wife's hand. The pen in its present position did not encourage him to kiss Timea's lips. He went into the dressing-room. There he found fresh water, a shirt, boots, all things necessary for his toilet. Since his wife had no idea when he was to get home, he must suppose that she had kept everything in readiness for his return at any day, and who knows for how long.

But how came his wife to be in Levetinczy? And what was she doing here? He dressed himself hastily, and hid his cast-off clothing in one of the trunks, lest he should be asked who had embroidered his shirts, or mended his garments; for this sewing might reveal something to a woman. Women understand the hieroglyphics of the needle! He had a good deal to do to clean his hands, for somebody might wonder what he had been about in the way of work, to make his hands so hard and rough.

When he was ready, Timea met him at the door of the office.

"Let us go to breakfast," she said, taking his arm.

In the dining-room Timar had a fresh surprise. The round table was laid for three people. Timea rang the bell, and a chamber-maid came through one door, and Athalie through another. The third place was for Athalie.

When she saw Timar, Athalie looked at him with unutterable scorn.

"Ah, Herr Levetinczy," she cried; "so you have got back again! This is a most charming act on your part. To say to one's wife, 'Here are my books, my keys—carry on my business for me!' and then to disappear for five months, without letting anyone know where to find you!"

"Athalie!" said Timea, reprovingly.

"Oh, I don't complain of your husband's long absence. Other men do the same thing. One goes to Carlsbad, another to Ema. It is a way which husbands have. But to shut a woman up in an office, where she must deal all day long with millers and sailors, and write pages of figures in great account-books; to keep her sending letters to all parts of the world; and to make her study English and Spanish, so as to be able to understand her foreign agents' letters;—this, I think, is too much to put upon any woman!"

"Athalie!" cried Timea, sternly.

Timar seated himself in silence at the familiar table.

"We have expected you daily, and every day your place has been set for you."

He could scarcely wait till breakfast was over. Athalie said no more, but every time she looked at Timar her eyes flashed fire, which was not the most cheerful thing at breakfast.

After the repast was ended, Timea asked her husband to go to the office again with her.

Timar began to puzzle his brain, as to what sort of a fable he should invent if she now began to ask him about his long absence. Some such lies, perhaps, as Theodore Kristyan was accustomed to concoct would be advisable. But Timea did not ask him one question. She drew two chairs up to the writing-desk, and offering her husband one, she seated herself in the other, and putting her hand on the ledger, she said—

"Here is the report of your business, since the time when you put it into my charge."

"Have you managed it all yourself?"

"I understood that was what you wished me to do. In your letter you said to me that you had undertaken a large and new business scheme, the trade in Hungarian flour with foreign countries. I saw that not only your money, but your mercantile honour and credit, were at stake; also that an important and new commercial interest would be the result of this experiment. I understood nothing of business, but I saw that a complete and careful supervision was most necessary to the success of this enterprise. On the receipt of your letter, I came to Levetinczy. I have studied book-keeping and accounts. I think you will find all things in order. The books are all balanced correctly."

Timar looked in amazement at this woman, who, with the

millions entrusted to her, had been able not only to save the capital, but to increase it. What cannot a woman do!

"Your first experiment with Hungarian flour in Brazil has succeeded admirably. Our flour has become the favourite in South America. Your agents in Rio Janeiro write me this; and they also unite in praising the ability and integrity of your chief manager there, Theodore Kristyan."

Timar said to himself, "Even if I do a wicked thing, good seems to come out of it; and if I plan the most foolish speculation, it turns out to be a wise one. Where will all this end?"

"After this first success," continued Timar, "I thought, just as you would have thought, that we must seize the opportunity and push our trade in this new market. So I leased new mills, freighted new ships, and at present we are sending half-a-million worth of flour to South America, so that we need fear no competition with other dealers."

Timar was astounded. This woman had more business talent than many a man. Another woman would have locked up the money to keep it safe, but she had dared to carry on the business which her husband had planned, and had increased it tenfold.

"I felt sure that you would have done this," said Timea.

"Certainly, certainly," stammered her husband.

"And the correctness of my judgment has been proven," continued Timea, "by the fact that since we have pushed the business, many rivals have dipped in, loading ships with flour and sending them to Brazil. But do not be troubled by this. We shall keep the field, for there is one of our secrets which they have not discovered."

"And what is that?"

"Possibly if they had asked their wives they might have found it out. Our wheat is the heaviest in the market, and that gives it its value in the South American cities. I take pains to get the flour from the heaviest wheat, and our rivals use the lighter qualities. They have blundered there, and we shall hold the market."

Timar was more and more surprised as his wife talked on. While he had been plucking forbidden fruit in Paradise for five months, she had been toiling day and night in a dry business enterprise to add new lustre to her husband's commercial reputation—denying herself all pleasures to increase

his fortune. And now she did not even ask her truant spouse, "What have you been doing all this time?"

Timar kissed his wife's hand with such reverence as one feels for a loved one who is dead, and who belongs to the dust, and can feel no kiss of man for evermore. Timar well knew the amount of labour all this business had entailed upon Timea. How severe a toil it must have been to an inexperienced woman, he, a skilful merchant, alone knew.

"But this has been a fearful task for you," he said to her

"Certainly, it was hard at the beginning. But I soon learned what to do, and then it was no burden. The work gave me pleasure."

What a sorrowful reproach. A young woman to whom work is a recreation!

Timar pressed his wife's hand, and sadness overspread his face. His heart was heavy. If he only could guess of what Timea really was *thinking*.

The key of the desk was in Timar's mind. If his wife had discovered his secret, then her present conduct was nothing less than a fearful vengeance, which showed most clearly the difference between the criminal and his victim.

"Have you not been back to Komorn?" he asked.

"Only once, when I had to look in your desk for your contract with Scamarelli."

Timar's heart stood still. But Timea's countenance was unchanged.

"Let us go back to Komorn," said he. "Business matters are now all arranged for the present, and we cannot expect news from our ships and cargoes before winter."

"That is true."

"Perhaps you would prefer a journey to Switzerland or Italy, rather than to go home."

"No, Michael. We have been long enough separated. Let us remain together."

But no pressure of the hand gave a tender meaning to her words.

Michael had not the courage to say any caressing word to her, and still less did he want to lie to her. And yet how continually he must deceive her—from morning till night. Even his silence was deceit towards Timea.

The examination of the books kept them busy till night-fall. At supper two guests were invited, the Mayor and the

Reverend Dean. The Dean had hastened to pay his respects to Herr Levetinczy, as soon as he had learned his return, and he appeared dressed in all his orders. When he saw Timar he broke out into a flood of rhetoric, likening his host to Noah, to Joseph, and to Moses, for his business enterprises, which had been the means of blessing so many people in various lands.

Timar replied courteously ; but he had hard work to restrain himself from ironical laughter, and to keep from saying—

“Ha ! ha ! ha ! I went into this business, not to do anybody any good, but merely to keep an ugly fellow away from a girl I loved ; and if any good has grown out of it, it is all the work of my wife there. It is actually laughable to be praised for this affair !”

The two guests were fond of wine, and grew merry as they drank. Timar joined them in telling stories and in laughter ; but as often as he looked at his wife’s cold face, his smiles faded, and his jests ceased. The two old men left at nightfall, with jocose hints as to reunited husband and wife, who preferred their own company to that of others.

“You had better go and leave your wife alone,” whispered Athalie to Timar. “She has such a headache to-night, that she will not be able to sleep. See how pale she is !”

“Are you ill, Timea ?” asked Timar.

“Oh, no ; not particularly.”

“Don’t believe her !” said Athalie. “She is often troubled with headaches and nervous chills. Her overwork, and the bad air here, are killing her ; and when I remonstrate with her, she says, if she dies nobody will regret her !”

Timar felt in his soul the tortures of a man stretched on the rack. Yet he had not the courage to say, “If you are suffering, let me spend the night in your room, and care for you.” He feared that in his sleep the name of Naomi might escape his lips, and his wife, whose illness kept her awake so many hours at a time, might hear it. He must not enter her chamber.

The next day they started for Komorn. They travelled by post-wagon. It was a weary journey. The three—Timar, Timea, and Athalie—hardly spoke a word to each other. In the afternoon, Timar, who could no longer endure his wife’s cold looks and silent presence, said he wanted to smoke, and escaped to the seat beside the driver, where he remained

during the rest of the trip. Whenever they halted, Athalie had all manner of complaints to make of the heat, the dust, the flies, the food at the hotels, the poor beds, etc.; and if *she* suffered so much, what must it have been for Timea, she said, who was so poorly! But from Timea herself, Timar heard no word of complaint.

When they reached Komorn, Mrs. Sophie met them, declaring that she had grown gray, she had been so lonely without them. But, in fact, she had enjoyed herself greatly, having had nothing to do all day long but to visit and gossip with her acquaintances.

Timar felt under a constraint when he entered his house. Home is either a hell or a heaven!

And now perhaps he will soon know what the marble coldness of his wife's face conceals from him. When he conducted Timea to her room, she gave him the key of his secretaire. This secretaire was an ancient piece of furniture. The upper part of it had a rolling top, behind which were many large and small drawers. In the large ones were the contracts; in the smaller ones, the bonds and jewels. The desk was made of mahogany and iron, curiously inlaid; and its lock was a secret one, which could not be opened, even after the key was turned in it, unless a person understood a hidden spring. All this had been explained to Timea, so that every part of the secretaire could be easily opened by her.

Timar opened the drawer in which the costly jewels lay, which as yet no one had seen. Such jewels as these have connoisseurs and art-lovers in abundance. There are schools and professors in this art, who recognise at once the value of gems, and who would naturally ask, "Where did you get this or that precious stone?"

Had Timea been curious, she might have opened the drawer containing the jewels, and have seen the diamond locket, which held a face so much resembling her own; and had she recognised her mother's picture, she must have understood all Timar's secret. She would then have known that he had come into possession of her father's wealth; and however he had gained this, he could not have gained it honourably. Through this fortune he had acquired a larger one, and had won her in marriage. But if she knew this, she might also think that Timar had got the treasure in

a more dishonourable way than was true. The sudden death and mysterious burial of her father might have roused suspicions in her mind that were unjust to Timar. And if she had such suspicions of him, what meant her self-sacrificing devotion to his interests, her care for his credit and honour? Was it contempt for the man whose name she bore, and a desire to exalt his reputation as a secret and subtle vengeance? If so, it would be unbearable. He must know the truth. So he called a lie to his assistance. He took the locket with the portrait in it out of the drawer, and, seating himself by his wife's side, he said, "Dear Timea, I spent some time in Turkey. I was in Scutari. There I met an Armenian jeweller, who showed me this portrait set in diamonds, which is very like you. I bought it, and brought it with me!"

Everything hung on the next moment.

If Timea's face remained impassive at sight of this ornament, or if her dark eyes turned on her husband with scorn, then he could read her meaning. Her meaning would have been—

"You did not buy this in Scutari. It has been here in your secretaire all the time of your absence. Who knows where you got it? Who knows where you have been during these past months? Who knows what dark mystery surrounds you?"

And then all would be over for Timar. But nothing of the kind happened. As soon as Timea saw the portrait, her face changed suddenly. A great excitement kindled her every feature, and brought life to her marble-like countenance. She pressed the picture to her lips, and her eyes filled with tears. Here was an emotion which could not be concealed. Her face glowed with new life! Timar was saved.

Timea's breast heaved with long-controlled feeling. She began to sob bitterly.

At the sound of her weeping, Athalie entered the room in amazement. She had never seen Timea so moved before.

As Athalie came in, Timea ran up to her like a self-forgetting child, and in a voice trembling between laughter and tears, she cried—

"Look! look! this is my mother! He brought it to me!" And then she ran hurriedly to Timar, and flung her arms round his neck, whispering in his ear tenderly—

"Oh, how can I thank you! Oh, how can I thank you!"

And Timar thought, "Perhaps now is my time to kiss these soft lips while they whisper thanks to me." But a voice in his heart echoed, "Thou shalt not steal!" For, after all that had taken place in No Man's Land, a kiss from these lips would be robbery.

He went into his room again, and brought out all the long-concealed ornaments; and as he did so, he thought, "Strange woman that she is! She had the keys in her hands which opened all the secrets of this secretaire to her, and yet she looked only for the contract which she needed." He thrust all the jewels into his travelling bag, and went into his wife's room again.

"I have not told you all," he said; "where I found the portrait, I found also these jewels and ornaments. I brought them all for you."

And he poured into Timea's lap the whole mass of jewelled treasures, which glittered there in a sparkling heap. It was like a vision of the Arabian Nights!

Athalie stood there, pale with envy and jealous rage. "All that ought to have been mine!" was her thought.

Timea's face clouded again. Indifferently, and with her old marble-like coldness, she looked on the heaped-up jewels in her lap.

The fire of the diamonds and rubies lent no glow to her countenance.

CHAPTER II.

A YOUNG GUEST.

Business had been prosperous. In January of the new year, news came that the cargoes of grain sent to Brazil were advantageously disposed of. The Hungarian flour had acquired so great a reputation, that already they were selling a domestic brand by that marketable name. The Consul to Brazil hastened to inform the Government what strides had been made in the introduction of this most valuable article of food, and commended to the royal notice the man who had

conferred this public benefit on all producers. The result was that Timar received, as a mark of high favour, the Cross of the Order of St. Stephen, and the title of "Excellency," for he was made a royal councillor.

And now that this high honour was conferred upon him, respect for him greatly increased in Komorn. So long as he was simply rich, he remained Michael Timar to most of his old acquaintances; but when royalty singled him out for special attention, he became worthy of everybody's homage. And everybody hastened to congratulate him—officers, corporations, ministers, and lawyers. Timar received them graciously and modestly.

Johann Fabula came too, to represent the shipping interest.

He was attired with a splendour that suited his changed circumstances. It was the custom in Komorn to lengthen into a visit a congratulatory call, and so Fabula was persuaded to remain for dinner.

Johann was a plain, outspoken man. As the wine loosened his tongue, he made no bones of telling Mrs. Timar that he hadn't any idea that such a noble, brave lady could be made of her, or that she could ever become Baronet Levetinczy's wife; for she used always to shock him so, because he thought her a ghost. But the providence of God was wonderful, and human wit very limited. How marvellously all things had turned out for good! And what happiness reigned over this house! He reverently invoked the Divine blessing on them all, and intreated that the hitherto unfulfilled prayer for the most worthy benefactor, Baronet Levetinczy, be heard. The house wanted a new guest in the form of a little angel. This only would fill his excellency's cup of happiness to the brim!

Timar, frightened, covered his glass with his hand. Could a petition inspired by wine reach a heavenly hearing?

Fabula, not satisfied with his earnest, supplicating wish, had some practical advice to give.

"His excellency harasses himself entirely too much with business cares. A man has but one life to live. I surely would not leave so beautiful a home, and so lovely a wife, for such long tiresome trips, to add to an income already beyond all calculation. But who is to blame that his excellency's feet burn, and he cannot keep still! Yet everything

succeeded because you watch it. Now, that Brazilian matter I'll admit, I thought it the craziest operation in the world. It *would* have been, if any other man had attempted it!"

Timar could not help replying, "My wife deserves all the credit of these last successes; you know, she managed these matters personally."

"I know her value, and appreciate her ladyship's virtues; but I know some other things too!"

Nobody enquired what this knowledge was; but like a bombshell came the next statement—

"I know where his excellency was during the whole summer that we did not see his face!"

Timar felt a cold fear creeping clean to his fingers and toes. Was it possible that this man actually knew his whereabouts?

"Shall I tell our gracious lady what you were up to all summer?"

Timar was ready to faint, though he moved not a muscle. Athalie had pricked up her ears.

"Why, yes, Johann, tell the ladies if you like," he answered, with forced constraint.

"Then I will report you!" cried Fabula, as he placed his emptied glass upon the table.

"The baronet took advantage of us. He consulted nobody, but secretly boarded the ship, and went to Brazil. Yes, ladies, he went to South America, and that is why we received such glowing accounts of the success of the flour trade." And here he gave a description of the dangers of an Atlantic voyage.

Timar breathed again.

"What nonsense you talk!" friend Johann.

"Athalie, give Herr Fabula a cup of black coffee."

"'Tis true, anyway. I found it out myself. You made a success of it, and there is nothing to be ashamed of. Only I have betrayed the secret to our gracious lady; and now let her punish the deserter by refusing him permission to go away again, unless he gives an exact account of his plans."

Timar studied the faces of the two ladies. Timea's looks exhibited fright and astonishment. Athalie's countenance betrayed a similar credulity. Both evidently believed that he had braved the terrors of the deep, as Fabula had painted

them; and the ex-sailor would have wagered his head on the correctness of his story. It was an opportune construction and explanation of Timar's absence; he did not deny it—used it, in fact, when necessary. He made the story so plausible, that even Athalie found nothing to mistrust. She knew intuitively that Timar was no longer miserable; but she could not penetrate the secret. She would have given much to know what balm had been poured into his wounded soul. Timea's grief gnawed at her vitals. To escape Athalie's watchful eye, she buried herself in her husband's account-books.

To the world Timar and Timea continued a model and loving pair. He lavished his wealth upon her, and she wore (to please him) what made her appear to the best advantage.

Athalie was lost in the puzzle.

"Were these two of a class whose love consisted in giving and receiving diamonds? Or are there people who do not love, and yet grow contented?"

Timar could scarcely await the arrival of spring. He intended to double the work of the year before, and he was anxious to get the mills into operation.

He persuaded Timea to devote herself to health and rest now. He had engaged a special confidential clerk, to take charge of the correspondence and books at home. She was to go, instead, to some watering-place for the season. No one asked him where *he* was going. Probably to South America again, and return with pious prevarications of Egypt and Italy and Turkey.

He hurried to the Lower Danube immediately after Timea was gone. As soon as the young thread-like shoots of the willows appeared, he had no longer peace at home. The alluring vision on the island had possession of all his thoughts.

He did not stop long at Levetinczy, but satisfied himself to give some general commands, and left the rest to the discretion of his employés. He was separated from Naomi by a half-day's journey only. Six months had elapsed since he had seen her.

An ardent longing to fly to her controlled him. He could scarcely wait for the daybreak. At the rising of the sun, he took his gun and bag over his shoulder, and started

from the dean's house, where he spent the night, without taking leave of his hospitable host.

Timar had previously forwarded his new row-boat to the well-known fisher's hut, whither he was accustomed to go on foot. There he found it, and rowed towards the reed bank. The boat glided like a sturgeon through the water. He made the trip in half his usual time.

It was April again, and spring was fully advanced. The trees on the larger island of Ostrova were in full bloom. Timar was surprised to see that No Man's Land presented a rust-brown aspect, as if the foliage had all been swept by fire. As he came nearer, it was plain to be seen that all Mother Theresa's favourites, the rows of fruit and nut trees, were withered and dried.

A sorry omen.

He went towards the interior, and listened for Almirus's familiar bark. Not a sound was audible.

The paths were neglected, the ground was covered with the fallen leaves of the previous autumn. It seemed to him as if the birds of the island sang no more.

As he approached the hut, his heart was seized with the most depressing premonitions. What had happened to the lonely dwellers of the island? He had been away a half year, coining money, showering valuables on his beautiful wife. The lonely inhabitants of No Man's Land were left to the shelter of heaven, if it pleased heaven to protect them.

When he reached the verandah, the door opened, and Mother Theresa came out. Her first glance was earnest. Then a bitter smile crept over her features.

"Ah, you have come at last!" she said to Timar, and then brightening, hastened towards him to shake hands. She asked why he looked so sad and serious.

"Has any misfortune happened?" he quickly asked.

"No; no misfortune," said Mother Theresa, with a quizzical smile.

"I was filled with anxiety at the sight of those withered nut trees," returned Timar, attempting to justify his melancholy.

"Last year's freshet killed those."

"And you are both well?" Timar asked impatiently.

Theresa answered softly—

"We are all well—all three."

“What?”

Theresa's smile was now very pleasant. She laid her hand goodnaturedly upon Timar's shoulder, and continued sportively—

“The wife of a poor smuggler was taken ill at our house. She left her babe with us!”

Timar stumbled into the cabin. In the back of the room stood a cradle made of braided switches. On one side, keeping guard, sat Almirus, on the other Naomi. Naomi rocked the cradle, and waited for Timar to come close to her.

The cradle held a babe, of rosiest cheeks and cherry-ripe lips. It lay asleep, with its eyes only half closed, and the little hands raised towards its face. Timar stood long entranced at the sight. He looked into Naomi's eyes. In those happy, shining eyes lay the solution of the riddle. A sweet content, a heavenly joy, pervaded her face. Exalted by a union of shame and love, she smiled and dropped her eyelids. Timar was beside himself with joy. Theresa laid her hand upon his arm—

“Are you angry with us for adopting the poor smuggler's waif? God sent him to us!”

He threw himself upon the floor, knelt in front of the cradle, caught the babe with its bed in his arms, and pressed it to his heart. He broke out into loud sobs, and shed tears, as only a man can who has carried within his heart a sea of troubles, and suddenly snapped the locks of pent-up repression. He kissed the heaven-sent messenger, on its head, cheeks, hands, hem of its little dress—everywhere he left the imprint of love and passion. Suddenly the little angel opened his eyes—his great, wondering, blue eyes—and stared at the strange face a moment; then he laughed and shouted, and closed his eyes again, not at all confused by the shower of kisses.

“And there is nothing due me any more?” asked Naomi, in a tone of gentle reproach.

Timar, still on his knees, glided over to her, and pressing her hands with his lips, laid his head in her lap, and remained silent as long as the babe slept.

When the little soul awoke, he began to prattle in his own musical language. This soon developed into a cry. He was hungry. Whereupon Naomi told Timar that he must leave the room; for it was not best for him to know how the infant of the smuggler's wife was fed.

Timar went out. His whole being was in a state of strange intoxication. He seemed to be on another planet, looking down upon the earth, which stood like a deserted globe far below him. The whole circle in which his life had hitherto revolved had lost its centre. It moved upon a new axis, a new life, a new aim. It puzzled him to know how he was to die out of that former world entirely. To live on two planets at once; to step from earth to heaven and enjoy the company of angels, and down again from heaven to earth to count money;—it was a problem trying to human faculties and mortal nerves.

Timar never tired watching the little fellow. He would lie for hours on the grass, play with him, coax him into good nature with a bright beautiful flower, and then beg it back in the greatest anxiety for fear he would choke himself. Everything went into his mouth. Timar allowed the little tyrant to play with his beard, and make havoc with his hair. He sang the child to sleep with soft lullabies.

His feeling toward Naomi had changed to a calm, perfect content. It was the delight of full recovery after a serious illness.

Naomi too had altered. A tender patience, a quiet dignity, united with a modest reserve, possessed the child of six months ago.

It took Timar many days to satisfy himself that it was not all a dream. Then his practical mind prompted some questions that only he could answer.

“What about the future now? What can you do with him? Give him money, lands, estates? But he can use no money here; you cannot add one square foot to the island. Take him with you, educate him, and bestow upon him an honoured name? The women would not give him up. You could not take *them* either—even if they would go—into the world *you* occupy. They can be happy nowhere but here in No Man’s Land. It is only on this island that the boy can grow to manhood, and hold up his head proudly, where no one will ask his name. The women have named him though—Adeodat, the God-given. He has need of no other name.”

Ruminating in this way in his walks about the island, one day a thought occurred to him. Hurrying back to the hut, he sought the happy Theresa.

"Theresa, are those carpenter's tools about the place yet, that you used in the changes here?"

"They are in the loft."

"Get them. I am going to cut down the nut trees that are now useless, and build our Dodi a house."

Theresa clapped her hands in astonishment. Naomi answered with kisses on Dodi's cheeks, as much as to say—

"Do you hear that, Dodi dear?"

"Yes, indeed," he repeated. "I can build a house, without anyone's help. It shall be a princely castle, as the Roumanians have built in Transylvania. I shall do every stroke of the work myself."

"Very good, Michael," said Theresa, laughingly. "I too have built a nest, like the swallows. But for carpenter's work one man is not enough. You know the saw has two handles, and you cannot manage it alone."

"But there are two of us," called out Naomi, jealously. "Can't I help? Do you think there is no strength in my arm?"

And she drew up the sleeve of her gown. It was a beautiful, well-rounded arm, worthy of Diana, goddess of hunting.

"This will help," was Timar's rejoinder, kissing down to the finger-tips the outstretched limb.

Timar took an axe at once, and with sturdy strokes felled one tree after another. It was not long before the palms of his hands were covered with blisters. Naomi cheered him with the information that women's hands never blister.

After these trees were cut, he needed Naomi's assistance. She handled the saw as well as he: her strength and powers of endurance were a match for his.

How happy they were! How exultingly they worked together! Timar realised the truth of his reflection, that the wood-sawyer, with his wife and only one broth-bowl between them, was happier far than he with his millions. The bean-soup was appetising, and they worked all the more enthusiastically when the last spoonful was swallowed.

At night they go back to the hut—the one with the axe on his shoulder, the other with the babe in her arms. They enjoy the evening meal. She fills his pipe, and then they tell each other the wonderful feats the boy has already accomplished. No need to ask whether they love each other.

The work progressed under Timar's hands. He used the tools as if he had never done anything else.

Naomi was astonished.

"Were you ever a carpenter's apprentice?"

"Of course I was; a ship carpenter."

"And how did you become master, that you can stay away from your work all summer? You do not have to obey any one now, do you?"

"I'll tell you some time."

But he never did explain how he had become a great lord, so that he could saw wood for weeks, if he wanted to, and report to nobody.

For many days he feared that he would be detected by some one on a passing ship. And whenever a boat appeared, he dodged out of sight. But every hour assured him that he was on a speck of land, safe for a hundred years from the inroads of civilisation, and the introduction of those nice moral questions, which uproot the natural and plant in its stead the conventional life.

And so he worked boldly and industriously, convinced that his excellency, royal councillor, baronet, and millionaire, would never be disturbed in his humble undertaking of building a nest for the birdling that scarcely had a name. And when his arm tired from this unaccustomed labour, unwatched save by eyes that looked in love, he rested and amused himself by whittling a willow umbrella with his pocket-knife, for the protection of the little one from the burning rays of the sun.

And what indescribable pleasure he extracted from it all. As anxiously as a mother's vigilance observes the coming of the first tooth, he listened for the first intelligible word. Naturally enough it was "Papa." Then came the worriments and ailments of childhood. Now many sleepless nights, to soothe the pains and restlessness of little Dodi.

Naomi remained in the nursery, while Timar rushed home every hour from his work to see how the little sufferer was doing. He would take him from Naomi, walk up and down, and sing in gentlest tones—

"Dearer to me is my sweet one's hut
Than the royal castle of Ofen."

And if he succeeded in soothing it to sleep, he exulted

more over the victory, than when he gained the homage of Komorn society, and the Cross of the Order of St. Stephen.

Finally, the work on the house had proceeded as far as Timar could carry it. He did not know what to do next.

The autumn was coming on. Theresa and Naomi did not wonder that it was time for him to go. They had undefined notions that his business took care of itself during the summer, but that it required all Timar's energy the rest of the year.

He took leave of the three a little earlier than usual.

He returned to Komorn at once. During his absence, every branch of his affairs had prospered again, far beyond his wildest anticipations. His wealth grew burdensome. Where he was happiest he needed nothing. What should he do with his riches? He would beautify his town residence. He engaged a skilful wood-carver from Transylvania. [They are noted for their beautiful carved palaces.] He ordered the walls, doors, and window work to be made of hard wood; the furniture in harmony with it. The whole to be fitted without a nail, like the tabernacle of old.

CHAPTER III.

THE CARPENTER.

When Timar came back he found Timea in delicate health. He at once called in two celebrated physicians from Vienna, to consult about his wife's condition. The doctors agreed that she needed a change of air. They advised Timea to spend the winter in Meran. Timar went with his wife and Athalie to this place. In the mild and wind-sheltered valley of the Tyrol, he selected as a residence for Timea a pretty little villa of the Swiss style, with a garden attached. He knew that this attention would give Timea pleasure.

During the winter he visited his wife several times, accompanied by an old man; and he discovered that this Swiss chalet was exactly to Timea's taste. On his return to Komorn, Timar resolved during the winter to build for his wife a house precisely similar to her Meran residence. The old man who had accompanied him on his visits was a master-workman at this trade. He had studied every detail

of the chalet at Meran, and now in Timar's house in Komora he had established a workshop, for carrying out the plan of house-building. It was to be a surprise to Timea, and no one must betray the scheme in advance. But a carpenter needs journeymen who can help him in his work. Journeymen who can keep secrets are hard to find. What was to be done? Timar suggested that he should serve as apprentice, and from morning till night he sawed, split, planed, and did all the work necessary to learn the trade, under the master-carpenter's orders.

But the carpenter himself, even though his lips had been sealed with the signet-ring of King David, could not have resisted telling people whom he could trust, confidentially on Sunday evenings, what a great surprise Herr Levetinczy was preparing for his wife. Every separate part of the house was to be already made and fitted, so that it could all be put together when done in the pretty garden on the Munsterberg. And he himself, this rich man, actually worked at it the whole day long like a journeyman, and was so skilful in the use of all the tools that one would think him an experienced workman. And all this drudgery Herr Timar was doing just to prepare a surprise for his wife; but nobody must breathe a word of it, lest it should get to her ears before she came home, and spoil all.

Soon the whole town knew of it. Mrs. Sophie heard it, and wrote about it to Athalie, and Athalie in her turn told it to Timea, so that the wife knew Timar's whole scheme: how on the first pleasant day after she got home, she was to go to the Munsterberg, and there in the garden find the exact fac-simile of her favourite chalet in Meran, with its little tables in the window, its hanging book-shelves, and its willow-seated chairs on the verandah. She was to be astonished and delighted by this; and when she thanked the old carpenter for this surprise, he was to reply, "Do not praise me, for the greater part of the work has been done by my apprentice, your husband, Herr von Levetinczy! You must thank him!" And then Timea must smile, and try to find words in which to express her gratitude. Words only! For everything is in vain! Whether her husband showers gifts upon his wife, or gives her black bread to eat, or transforms himself into a day-labourer for her sake, he can in no wise win her love.

All happened as it had been arranged. On Timar's return in

the spring, the surprise on the Munsterberg was carried out according to the programme. A fine collation was served, and a host of guests invited on the festive occasion. The women said, no woman was good enough for such a man as Timar. He was the ideal husband. But the men were of a different opinion. It is not a good sign, they said, when a man has to resort to gifts and flattery to please his wife. Athalie was silent, puzzling herself in vain to find the Ariadne-clew to this mystery. But she could not find it.

She understood Timea perfectly. She was suffering and fading away. But that poison kills slowly which works upon the soul, and not upon the body. It kills slowly, but surely.

But how was it with Timar? His countenance betrayed happiness. And where had he got that? He flattered Timea, and paid court to her to win her favour. What was he concealing under this method? He acted the part of a loving and happy husband before the world: he was gay in company, pleasantly indifferent to Athalie herself, as if he had forgotten all that she had said to wound him to the quick, and as if her scornful smiles could no longer sting him. He even danced with Athalie in society.

Was he happy, or was he pretending to be so? or was he trying to perform the impossible—to win his wife's heart? In that he could never succeed.

Athalie knew that from her own experience. Many wooers and men of high rank and fortune had sought her in marriage, but she refused them. All men were alike indifferent to her. She could love one only, whom she hated also; but she alone understood Timea. Yet Timar baffled her. She could not read the riddle of his smiling eyes, his caressing words, his amiability to all.

Timar observed the searching gaze of his spy's eyes, and smiled in his secret soul.

"You will seek in vain," he said to himself, "to discover why I have spent my winter in this toilsome labour. I have given myself the trouble of learning a trade, so as to build a house in a secret corner of the world for a woman whom I never name, and yet for love of whom I gladly work till my hands are rough and callous. Find out, if you can, the whereabouts of my darling, you she-devil in my house!"

Again Timar consulted physicians as to his wife's health, and they advised her to go to Biarritz. Timar went with her

there, and selected a comfortable house for her, and told her to make her toilette and equipage as fine as that of the English ladies and Russian princesses. He left her a casket full of gold, and told her to bring it back empty. He was generous to Athalie. He put her down in the visitors' book as Timea's cousin, and told her to dress as elegantly as his wife.

Could the head of a house fulfil his duties more absolutely? Then he hurried off, not to Komorn, but to Vienna. There he bought a full set of carpenter's tools, had them packed, and sent to Pancsova. But now he must plan some stratagem how to get all these cases to the island.

He must be prudent. The old fisherman, who had seen him go and come before, might have found out who he was, and why he went to the island so often. So he had the boxes carried by wagon to the poplar woods on the shore of the Danube, and unloaded there. Then he called some of the fishermen together, and asked them to take these cases over to the desert island, as they contained arms.

With this one word the secret was as safe as if at the bottom of the sea. He could now go and come by day or by night. No one would gossip about him, for all believed that he was an agent of the hero-chieftain of Servia, and of the Tschnergova. Tortures would not have forced these people to betray him. From this time forward he was sacred in the eyes of these fisher-folk. He deceived everybody with whom he was brought into contact, that he might involve his own plans in deeper obscurity.

The fishermen carried over the heavy cases at night. He was present. When they landed them on the island, in a safe place which they selected, Timar wished to pay them, but they would not take a penny from him. They pressed his hands, and said, "Zbogom!" which means, "God will reward us!" The fishermen left, and he remained on the island.

It was a lovely moonlight night, and the nightingales were singing in the thickets. Timar hurried up the path which led to the house. He passed by the half-finished carpenter work which he had left in the autumn. The beams had been carefully covered with rushes, that they might not be injured by the winter's dampness. The path led him along the rose meadow. The roses had long since faded; the time of their

blossoming Timar had spent in his summer-house, or by the sea-side. He had delayed his return hither, and perhaps had been expected with anxious impatience. But he had been forced to envelop his actions in clouds of deceit.

He approached the house on tip-toe. He heard no noise, and this was a good sign. That Almirus did not bark, he understood to mean that they had the dog sleep in the kitchen, to prevent the waking of the child by yelping in the night.

“All must be alive and well in the house!”

O, how often he had dreamed of this cabin; how often he had imagined himself near it once again! Sometimes wild fancies pursued him—that the house might have been burned, and the inmates gone, no one knew where.

Sometimes visions of terror shook his soul, and he had seemed to see the corpse of his beloved Naomi before him, with her golden tresses streaming on the ground, and her dead child pressed to her heart! What anguish filled his mind when these thoughts stormed in upon him! He ought not to have left his darlings so long alone! But now, as he stood before the little dwelling, all such wild fancies vanished. Here all was as he had left it. Here lived only those who loved him. How should he make known his presence? How should he surprise his darlings? He stood close to the low window, half overgrown with roses, and began to sing a nurse’s lullaby—

“Dearer is my sweet one’s hut
Than the king’s palace at Ofen.”

It was a good thought. In a moment the casement was flung open, and Naomi looked out, her face beaming with surprise and delight.

“My Michael!” she cried rapturously.

“Your own!” whispered Timar, flinging his arms about her neck; “and Dodi!” This was his second thought.

“He is asleep.”

“Hush! Don’t let us wake him!”

And then they whispered together, and kissed each other softly.

“Now, come in!”

“No; I’m afraid I shall wake Dodi, and then he will cry!”

"Oh, he is not a crying baby now. He is over a year old!"

"A whole year old! Why, he is almost a man!"

"He can call you by name!"

"What! he talks already?"

"Yes; and he can walk, too! And he eats everything!"

"That is not right. He is too young!"

"What do you know about it? Don't you want to see him?"

"Yes; draw the curtain back, so that I can see him in the moonlight!"

"No; the moon is bad for a child. If it shines on one, it makes him ill!"

"You are a simpleton, to believe that!"

"There are strange things about children. You can't help seeing that. And so they are entrusted to women, because women have faith in all signs! Come in, and look at him."

"I won't go in while he is asleep; I might wake him. Come out to me!"

"No, I can't do that. He might wake; and mother sleeps so soundly, she wouldn't hear him stir."

"Very well. I'll wait outside."

"Won't you go and lie down?"

"No; it will soon be morning. Stay with baby; but leave the window open!"

And there he remained by the window, peeping into the little chamber, on whose walls the moon painted fantastic shadows. He heard a light murmur, such as half-waking children make; then a soft voice singing a nursery rhyme; and then a kiss, such as mothers give babies who are so good as to go to sleep. Leaning on the window-sill, Timar stood, while his heart beat rapturously, till the dawn of day filled the little apartment. The child was the first to waken. He laughed aloud, as a signal that he had come back to earth, and that nobody now would be allowed to sleep longer. The child laughed and chattered. What did he mean? Only two people knew—Naomi and himself.

As Timar took Dodi in his arms, he said to him—

"Now I am going to stay with you till I build you a house. What do you think of that?"

The boy answered something, which, according to Naomi's interpretation, was—

"That is right!"

CHAPTER IV.

NAOMI.

Timar spent his happiest days in this double life. Nothing disturbed the completeness of his enjoyment, save the thought that there was another existence, to which he must eventually return. The desire possessed him occasionally to tear himself permanently from all connection with that outside world. He might easily have wiped out all trace of his life; simply not go back to it. There would be one year's search for him. He would be mourned for two years, perhaps. After the third, the places and people that knew him would have forgotten him entirely; and he would still possess Naomi.

Naomi, a perfect treasure in herself!

All the graces of womanhood were combined in her. Her beauty was not skin-deep, to vanish with the years of coquetry. Every change of expression added a new charm to her features. Her disposition was gentleness, tenderness, and passion. Maiden, fairy, and wife were harmonised in her being. There was not a trace of selfishness in her love. Her whole nature merged itself in that of her lover. She had no special cares, no special joys: her interests centred in her surroundings. Always merry and gay, her untiring hands were ever ready to lend assistance indoors and out.

But much as Timar loved Naomi, with the smiling boy in her arms, he had other yearnings; or rather, his mind dwelt upon his costly stake in this dangerous game of life. Naomi was a pearl of great price. She cost a whole world. Position, rank, friends, millions of money, undertakings that involved the interests of thousands of people, and, lastly, all hope of Timea. The sacrifice of his worldly goods counted for little

His riches came from the depths; let them return whence they came. But his pride could not bear the thought that the white-faced woman, who scorned his love, and whose iciness all his ardour could not melt, should be made happy through his non-existence. The woman who could not love faded hourly; *he* lived happy, happy days, in this secret, stolen, unpretentious enjoyment.

And during these joyous hours the new house grew under the deft hand of the carpenter's apprentice. Windows, doors, and roof were all completed. He had exchanged the builder's tools for those of the cabinet-maker and joiner; and through the long day, far into the evening, his gay song mingled with the sounds of saw and plane. Night only lured him from his work-bench. Then he returned to the cabin, where a savoury supper awaited him. After an ample meal, he stretched his tired limbs on the verandah bench, and lighted his pipe. Naomi, seated at his side, placed Dodi on the beloved's knee, and exhibited the results of the day's tuition. A new word! That little word was more than the wisdom of the wise!

"What would you take in exchange for Dodi?" he asked Naomi, playfully; "this earth filled with diamonds?"

"Not heaven yonder, peopled with angels!"

Little Dodi was in a particularly frisky mood. He roguishly snatched the pipe from Timar's mouth with both hands, and then threw it quickly on the ground. It was made of clay, and there it lay in fragments.

Timar did not forbear to pass judgment on this act of baby-naughtiness. He lightly slapped the unfortunate hands of the child, who looked in frightened amazement at this proceeding, buried his head in Naomi's bosom, and began to cry.

"Just see," said Naomi, "you would sacrifice him for your pipe, and that is only clay!"

Timar regretted his hasty discipline, and tried with flattering words, and showers of kisses on the injured hand, to get back into Dodi's good graces. The child only sobbed and cried the more, hiding his face in his mother's neckerchief.

Naomi could not soothe him to sleep the whole night through. This angered Timar. He said that the child would have an obstinate, disagreeable disposition, if he were not conquered. Naomi made no answer, save with a gently reproving look.



Next morning Timar repaired to his work-bench unusually early, but his merry voice was not heard keeping time with his plane. He left his work soon again; and Naomi was scared when she looked into his face: a few hours had wrought a great change.

"Something is the matter with me," he said to her. "My head is so heavy, my legs refuse to carry me, and every bone in my body aches. I must lie down."

Naomi prepared his bed with all possible speed, and helped him undress. She noticed with apprehension that Timar's hands were cold, and his breath feverish.

Mother Theresa felt his forehead and hands, and advised that he be well wrapped up, because he was threatened with a fever.

Timar dreaded something worse. Typhus fever was raging in this region: the frequent freshets of the Danube had developed this dreaded disease in an uncommon degree. As he laid his head upon his pillow, he still controlled his senses enough to meditate on the results if he fell a victim to the fever. What would become of Timea? And what of poor Naomi? Who would look after Naomi, a widow before she was a wife? Who would educate little Dodi? And what fate awaited him as a man? Who would tell Timea when to wear the widow's veil?

Two women made unhappy to the hour of their death on his account! And his worry went further. In the paroxysm of the disease, what would he not say in the hearing of Theresa and Naomi, who would be about him day and night? He might call Timea by name, and divulge his relation to her. Naomi knew that name. It was horrible for Timar to feel the certainty of all these fears, and know no way out of the dilemma.

With nothing to keep guard on these hitherto locked lips, the buried secrets of his heart, like long-caged birds, would fly out, and proclaim to these unsuspecting women the whole truth. Every fear increased his fever. Added to the mental anguish and physical suffering, another memory weighed him down as a burden of sin. It was only a little thing, but it grieved and distressed him more than tongue can tell. The blow on Dodi's hand! Why had he given it? He wanted to see the little one.

"Naomi!" he called, with heated breath.

"What is it?" Naomi whispered close to him.

He had lost consciousness, and did not know what he wanted. The fever had full sway. He was not silent a moment. Naomi had to hear every word. It was a strange man that spoke, who kept no secret, and showed out his true nature—his real feeling—with every word. But one name he never mentioned in all his delirium. Once he was walking with a nobleman through the gardens of his palace, asking a favour:

"I know a maiden on No Man's Land. Give it to her. No one deserves it more than she. They call her Naomi. Her other name? Are queens known by other names? Naomi the First, by the grace of God, Queen of No Man's Land and the rose meadows! As soon as I am king, I shall call my ministers—Almirus and Narcissa the faithful!"

Then he spoke of his palaces.

"How do you like these halls, Naomi? See these golden mouldings. And these dancing angels in fresco. They are just like your little Dodi. You shiver here? so do I. It is so cold. Come, let us go, love, back to our little cabin. The walls are too high. One little dancing angel is enough. I do not like palaces. How cold it is. Do not look there. Somebody is listening at that door yonder. A beautiful woman's face is there; do not look. She will stab you with those eyes of hers. Once this house belonged to her. Now her ghost haunts the place. She has a dagger in her hand, and is after my Naomi. Let us fly."

But his flight was obstructed by an impediment.

"I cannot stir," he groaned.

"The whole weight is on my chest. This money will stifle me. I am buried in gold, gold, gold! I am smothering. Reach me your hand, Naomi, and pull me out of this heap."

His hand rested in Naomi's hand. She shuddered, wondering what evil spirit could be plaguing the poor ship-master with these harassing dreams of gold.

Then it was Naomi again.

"Naomi, you do not care for diamonds? You are a little goose. The fire in the diamonds cannot burn. But you are right—the fire does burn. I never knew it before. It is the fire of the infernal regions. The names are alike: Diamond, Diabolus. Let us throw them back into the water, I know where they came from. I'll carry them back. Hold your breath and pray. I am going back to the sunken ship.

I shall not be gone any longer than you can stand and look on without breathing. I'll be back. Only into the cabin. Ha! Who is lying in the berth?"

And then such a horror seized him, that he attempted to spring from his bed.

"Somebody is in the berth!"

But he spoke no name.

"See how the red moon shines in the window! Please draw the curtain. Shut out the light; the red half-moon is coming nearer."

And when his brain cooled, he exclaimed—

"How beautiful you are without diamonds, Naomi! That fellow's on the other side of the world. But the globe is transparent as glass, and he can see me, just as I do him. He is collecting rattlesnakes, to scatter all over our little island. Almirus, Almirus, don't let him come!"

And then he suffered all the agony of a battle with the dreaded venomous snakes.

"I had that entire fleet loaded with flour. There comes a tornado. It is shattering and cracking every joint in the ships. The world is powdered white. The sea is white—the sky is white—the wind is white. How astonished the moon looks while the wind is powdering her red cheeks. Laugh, Naomi!"

But Naomi only wrung her hands and trembled. The poor thing! She never left his bedside day nor night. During the day she sat beside him; and at night, she drew the linden settee beside his couch, and slept as best she could. She often laid her head on his pillow, placed his burning brow on her cool cheek, and kissed the feverish sighs from the lips she loved. The danger of the infectious typhus never occurred to her.

Mother Theresa told her that the crisis usually occurred on the thirteenth day.

How she prayed during the long hours approaching the decisive turn! Imploring God to be merciful, she asked that, if the grave must have a sacrifice, He would take her and spare Michael.

Naomi, in her simplicity, thought she was dealing with almost a human being, willing to make a bargain with her. She offered the whole world and herself included, as a fair exchange for the life of her beloved Michael.

The angel of death accepted the terms!

In the middle of the thirteenth day, the delirium, fever and cerebral disturbances disappeared. The nervous excitement gave place to a flagging weakness, the favourable symptom of the disease. A loving, attentive care from this point could coax the invalid back to full restoration. Mother Theresa had instructed Naomi how carefully Timar must be spared any excitement, if he should ever reach this stage of his illness. That he would be exceedingly irritable; that she must have nothing for him but smiles, however captious and fault-finding he might be. A momentary agitation might result in his death.

The night of the fourteenth day, Naomi never stirred from his bedside, even to kiss Dodi good-night. Mother Theresa was caring for the child during these nights of sickness and trial.

Early in the morning, as Timar had dropped into his first heavy sleep, Theresa whispered into Naomi's ear—

“Little Dodi is very ill.”

Poor Naomi!

Naomi, dismayed, hastened to the child. She had not seen the little innocent face for many hours, and how altered it was! He did not cry. Croup in its later stages has no moanings, but the unexpressed pains are all the more terrible. Naomi looked pleadingly at her mother, and then at the poor little sufferer. Theresa could not bear the glance that bespoke unutterable anguish.

“Is there no help, mother? You who have done so much for the suffering and dying?”

“None!”

Naomi threw herself passionately beside her little one, and begged it with kisses and heartrending entreaty to look at her.

It was the glassy stare—the frightened look of death.

“O, do not look at me so, darling! do not look at me so!”

The child coughed huskily.

Naomi held him tremblingly, and listened whether the sleeper in the other room had been disturbed. She heard his voice. She laid the child on the bed, and hurried to Timar.

He was nervous and cross.

“Where were you?” he asked, angrily. “You have left

me all alone. You are never here to wait upon me when I need something."

"O, please forgive me," returned Naomi, with a smile; "I went after some fresh water."

"Why could not Mother Theresa go? She has nothing to do. The window is open, and a rat could jump in while I sleep."

Convalescents from this disease have a horror of rats; it is a symptom peculiar to typhus fever.

"Darling, none could get in at the window. Don't you know it is protected by a lattice?"

"Where is the fresh water?"

Naomi brought him a glass. He was out of sorts again.

"This is not fresh water. You want me to die of thirst."

Naomi bore all the censures very gently.

He fell asleep again, and Naomi slipped back to Dodi.

Mother and daughter arranged with each other, that while Michael slept Theresa should watch him, and when he began to awake a motion to Naomi brought her instantly to his side. All the night long she travelled from one sick bed to the other. The child grew constantly worse; nothing could be done; and Naomi could not weep, lest Timar should see traces of tears. Every now and then he asked where she had been. She could not tell him the truth, and had constantly to devise stories to quiet him.

The next day Timar was noticeably better. He asked for some broth. Naomi joyfully brought some; it had been prepared in anticipation. He drank it all with avidity. Then he asked—

"How is our little Dodi?"

Naomi was frightened. She feared Timar would discover how her heart beat at his question.

"He is sleeping," she answered.

"Why is he sleeping now? Is he sick?"

"Oh no; he is well now!"

"Why did you not bring him to me when he was awake?"

"Because you were asleep then."

"That is true. But now that I am awake, bring him to me; I want to see him."

"Very well, Michael dear."

"Take him this kiss."

And Naomi carried the farewell kiss to the dying child.

At dawn Timar awoke, and found himself alone again.

Poor Naomi had spent the entire night at the side of the little sufferer. She wiped the death-dews from his face, and forcibly pressed the tears back into her heart. The struggle was long, the breathing more difficult every moment; with the rising of the sun, the little spirit broke loose from its prison, and, like a lark, soared higher and higher, away from earth and its pain, away from Naomi and her heartbreak—away from the troubles and sorrows of earth for evermore.

* * * * *

It was all over.

Before Naomi's heartstrings could snap, Timar called. She entered with a smile! Oh, it was pitiful!

"Were you with Dodi?" asked the sick man.

"Yes; I just came from him."

"Is he sleeping now?"

"Yes, dear; he is sleeping sweetly."

"I do not believe it; he ought to be awake now."

"'Tis true; he is sleeping so quietly, we must not disturb him."

And her finger-tips felt the lids still that she had just before gently closed for the last long sleep.

And yet she must smile, and shake back the flood that demanded vent from her bursting heart! One look might affect Michael so seriously.

That afternoon Timar was again nervous and irritable beyond all endurance. He called Naomi, who was in the next room for a moment. She hastened towards him, and looking lovingly on him, stroked his hair. But the sick man was in a very bad humour, and felt himself sadly neglected.

Upon Naomi's breast there was a threaded needle. He noticed it.

"Ah! ho! You have been sewing! You have time for that. What piece of finery is it now, so necessary to be finished?"

Naomi glanced at him tenderly, and thought of the simple garment which lay unfinished in the other room, soon to enshroud the lifeless form of her darling Dodi.

"Oh, I was trying to finish a chemisette," she replied, softly.

Timar said, with an injured dignity—

"Vanity, thy name is woman!"

Naomi rejoined goodnaturedly—

“You are right, Michael; I should not be so giddy and anxious about dress when you are not well. It is selfish!”

The torments of sleeplessness plagued Timar. He could not coax slumber to his eyes. He was constantly worrying about little Dodi, and he repeatedly sent Naomi out to see if anything was the matter.

As often as she went, she kissed the inanimate form, and spoke sweet flattering words to the ears that heard no more—
“My little Dodi, my birdling!” “Are you sleeping still?”
“Do you love me yet?”

Then she came back to Timar, who had listened, and for whom this sorrowful deception was practised.

“Nothing ails Dodi, dear.”

“And still he sleeps so long; I think you should waken him.”

“We will see about it later,” she softly said.

Timar dropped to sleep for a moment. He was awake again, but did not know that he had been asleep.

“Naomi, I heard Dodi sing. What a beautiful voice the child has!”

Naomi pressed both hands on her heart, and with superhuman strength kept back the pain and overpowering grief.

Yes; he was singing with the choir of angels—the innumerable throng.

Next morning Timar spoke of Dodi again.

“Go,” he said, “carry Dodi out into the open air. It is not good for the child to be housed all the time. Take him into the garden for a while. I will dream while you are gone.”

Theresa had dug a grave near a weeping willow during the previous night.

Naomi left the sick chamber, carefully turning the key, when she was quite sure that Michael had fallen into a doze. And then she and her mother reverently and sorrowfully carried the precious remains into the garden, and committed the little body to the bosom of mother earth, where there was no more suffering, no more anguish.

Why had he come to be taken so soon? Who rejoiced in the presence of the bright spirit of Dodi now? Naomi did not wish a mound to be made over the grave. If Michael should see it, he would grieve, and thereby hinder his recovery. She arranged instead a tasteful garden spot, and

transplanted in the centre a pure white rose-bush; one of those that Michael had cultivated himself.

Then she hurried back to the sick room.

Timar's first question was, "Where is Dodi?"

"I left him in the garden."

"What has he on?"

"His little white dress and blue ribbons."

"That is so becoming to him. Is he properly wrapped up?"

"Very carefully."

"When you go out again, bring him in to me."

Naomi was not able to stay in the room another moment. She went out and fell on her mother's neck, but she did not shed a tear. She knew that she must not for Timar's sake. Presently she walked out to the garden spot, and plucked a half-opened bud and carried it to Michael. Mother Theresa followed her.

"But where is Dodi?" he asked impatiently. "You were to bring him in to-day."

Naomi knelt by him, and with a smile handed him the white rose.

"How strange," said he; "this rose has no perfume, as if it had grown on somebody's grave."

Naomi arose and left the room.

"Well," asked Timar enquiringly of Theresa.

"Do not blame her," Mother Theresa began, in a quiet, pleading tone. "You have been very, very ill. Thank heaven the danger is past now. But you know typhus fever is so contagious. I told Naomi she must not allow the child near you while you were so sick. I may have erred, but I meant it for the best."

Michael pressed Theresa's hand.

"You were quite right. And I was so foolish never to think of that. Perhaps he is no longer in the next room."

"No; we prepared a little shelter for him in the garden."

It was too sadly true.

"You are very kind and thoughtful, Theresa. Go back to Dodi now, and send Naomi to me. I will not tease her any more to bring Dodi here. As soon as I am able to get up, you will take me to him, won't you? There will be no danger then."

"Yes, Michael, we will."

And in this delusion Timar remained until he was able to leave the sick chamber.

One beautiful summer afternoon, mother and daughter assisted him to the bench in front of the cottage; there he rested his weak head on Naomi's shoulder. Timar had the feeling that the leaves of the trees were whispering a secret—that the bees were humming a message.

A strange quiver came over him. Looking into Naomi's face, a painful foreboding took possession of his soul.

"Naomi!"

"What is it, Michael dear?"

"Gentle Naomi, look at me."

Naomi slowly looked into his eyes.

"Where is little Dodi?"

At this question the poor thing could control herself no longer. She turned her martyr-like face toward the blue sky, and pointed her hands heavenward, and burst into tears.

"He is dead!" he whispered, and drew her close to his heart, and let her weep out her bursting grief, so long pent up.

It would have been sacrilege to stay the flow of a single tear.

His eyes were dry. He was amazed—frightened—at the magnanimity and heroism of this woman, which lifted her so far above him. And when the waters of her grief were stayed, she looked smilingly into Timar's eyes, like a ray of sunlight through the rainbow.

"And you could hide all this from me?"

"I was afraid to let you know it."

"And you have not dared to cry for fear that I might be disturbed?"

"I waited patiently till it was right for me to do it."

"And when I missed you, you were taking care of him, and I scolded you for leaving me!"

"You said nothing amiss, Michael dear."

"When I gave you that kiss, you knew it was my good-bye to him. And when I said that cruel thing about your vanity, you had been sewing our darling's shroud—yet you smiled, though you were stabbed to the heart by my wicked words. O, Naomi, how I love you!"

They sat, folded in each other's arms, silent a long time.

At length he asked—

"Where have you laid him? Take me there."

"Not to-day. It would be too far for you; to-morrow perhaps."

And every day she put him off.

"You would stay too long at his grave, and get sick again. That is the reason I did not mark the spot with a cross or a mound. You should not find Dodi's little bed, and grieve away your returning strength."

But Timar was not cheered.

When he felt strong enough to walk alone about the island, his whole aim was to seek for the place no one wished to tell him of.

One day he returned with a brighter face to the hut. He held in his hand a white odourless rose.

"Is this it?" he asked Naomi.

She nodded her head. It was a surprise to her that her sad secret could not be hidden from him.

He seemed satisfied after that, like one who has succeeded in his undertakings.

He sat for days on the bench in front of the cabin, striking his cane about here and there amongst the smooth white pebbles, and talking to himself in an undertone—

"Not for a world full of diamonds; not for the joys of heaven and all its angels; but you would not sacrifice a poor clay pipe for him, and when it broke, you struck his little hand."

The half-finished castle remained untouched. Great valerian flowers overspread its four sides, and hid its beauties from view. Timar did not go near it again. Even Naomi had little power to inspire his wavering strength, or to infuse life into his drooping spirits.

CHAPTER V.

MELANCHOLY.

One bud after another opened on the white rose-bush, and Timar did nothing all day long but watch the blossoms as they appeared and unfolded themselves. As each flower burst into full bloom, Timar plucked it, and pressed it in his tablets, and put it into his breast pocket, that it might wither near his heart.

That was a sorrowful sort of diversion. All the tenderness with which Naomi overwhelmed Michael could not cure his melancholy. The fond caresses of the woman grew wearisome to him. Yet Naomi could have cheered him by the utterance of one word. But a sort of modesty forbade her to speak it unless questioned. And it did not occur to Timar to question her. It is the peculiarity of a diseased mind to think only of the past, and to think of this continually.

At last Naomi said to Timar—

“Michael, it would do you good to go away!”

“And whither?”

“Out into the world. Here everything saddens you. Go away, and you will get well. I will pack up your clothes to-morrow, and the fruit-dealers can take you off the day after.”

Timar said nothing, but he nodded his head in assent.

His illness had so weakened him, and the blow which had fallen upon him had so shattered his nervous system, that he himself said that if he remained there longer, he should go mad or commit suicide. Suicide! There is no easier way to get out of a false position. Misfortune, heartache, despair,

injustice, disappointment, shattered hopes, the memory of a dear, dead face—all these are but evil dreams; a touch of the trigger, and one escapes these visions by awaking elsewhere!—while, if one remains here, he must dream on!

On the night before his departure, after supper, Michael, Theresa, and Naomi sat together on the little bench outside the door, and Timar could not forget that where they now were but three, they had a little while ago been four. The full moon peeped out from the fleecy clouds. Naomi held Timar's hand in his.

"What can the moon be?" asked Naomi.

Timar clenched his hand in Naomi's clasp, and said to himself—

"It is my evil star! Would I had never seen the red half-moon!"

But Theresa answered her daughter—

"It is a burnt-out world; a planet on which there is neither a tree nor a flower, nor a living creature; nor has it air or water, sound or colour, within its boundaries."

"Then this great star exists only for itself!" cried Naomi. "Does nobody inhabit it?"

"No one knows," replied Theresa. "But in my school-days, at the Institute, we often looked at it through the telescope. It was made up of deep chasms—burnt-out craters, the professor told us. Of course no telescope could be strong enough to see any living creature upon the moon, even if there were any there. But astronomers can tell that there is neither water nor air upon this satellite; and without these two things neither man nor beast could exist in any world."

"Yet somebody could live there!" said Naomi.

"How can you think so?"

"I will tell you. Long ago, when I was alone, involuntarily sad thoughts used to trouble me. When I sat on the shore and looked into the water, I used to think how pleasant it seemed down there, and how peacefully one might rest there. Don't be frightened, Michael; that was before I had you! But then I used to ask myself, 'If your body rests below in the Danube, where will your soul be? That must go somewhere!' And then I thought that a soul which of its own accord breaks away from its body, could go nowhere else but to the moon. And now I believe it all the more. For if it has neither tree nor flower, air nor water, sound

nor colour, it is just the place for those who are eager to escape from the body: for there they will find a world where there is nothing—where nothing can either trouble them, or gladden them.”

Theresa and Timar sprang up involuntarily, and gazed at Naomi in amazement, and she was at a loss to know why what she said had so startled them. She did not know that her own father had been a suicide, and that the man whose hand she now held was tempted to become one also.

Timar said it was growing cool, and they had better go into the house. He had now one more association of horror with the moon. The first had been given him by Timea; he owed the second to Naomi. It was a fearful punishment for the man, that a glittering star must ever shine in the sky to remind him of his first sin—of that first evil deed which had ruined his life.

A day or two later, Timar left the island. He went by the half-built house without casting a glance at it.

“In the spring you will come again!” whispered Naomi tenderly in his ear.

Poor creature! She found it quite natural that Michael should belong to her only one half of the year. And the question, “To whom does he belong the rest of the time?” she never put to herself.

When Timar returned to Komorn, he was quite exhausted by the long journey.

Timea was frightened when she saw him. Athalie shuddered also. She had her reasons for it.

“You have been ill!” cried Timea, clinging to her husband’s breast.

“Yes; I have been very ill!”

“Somewhere on your travels?”

“Yes,” replied Timar, who felt as if he were undergoing a cross-examination, and must be on his guard as to every answer.

“Were you ill long?”

“Yes; for many weeks.”

“My God! And had you anyone among strangers to take care of you?”

From Timar’s lips the reply almost escaped—

“Yes; an angel!”

But he checked himself, and answered—

"A man can get everything with money!"

It was not Timea's way to show it if anything grieved her, and Timar saw no change upon his wife's passionless face. It had always been like this, a cold embrace on his return, which never brought him any nearer to Timea. But Athalie whispered in his ear—

"For God's sake, take care of your life and health!"

Timar understood the cause of her anxiety. He must live that Timea must suffer; for if Timea became a widow then there would be nothing in the way of her happiness, and that would be a hell for Athalie! Timar's horror of his own life was now increased by the thought that this demon, who hated both him and his wife, was now praying that he might be spared, so that both of them should be the longer miserable. Everybody was struck by the change which the last half-year had made in Timar's appearance. He had been a vigorous and active man, but now he was a silent and wavering shadow.

The first day after his return, his book-keeper brought him the ledgers, and put them on the desk before him. But hours after the clerk saw that his master had not even opened the books. He signed papers almost without looking at them, and sometimes in the wrong place, or twice over—he who had been so accurate a business man. He would shut himself up in his room under pretence of sleeping, and then he would be heard pacing up and down the floor for hours. At table he was so gloomy that no one dared speak to him. He scarcely tasted the food, and never touched wine. He could not sit up as evening drew on, and if he sat down for a moment he fell asleep; while, if he undressed and went to bed, he was wide awake all night long. O how cold the bed was! Everything at home was so cold. Every piece of furniture, every picture on the wall, even the frescoes on the ceiling seemed to say to him, "Why are you here? This is no place for you! Here you are a stranger!"

Timea would come to his room and ask him "if she could do anything for him."

"Nothing," he would reply; "I am only tired by my journey."

"May I not send for the doctor?"

"No; I am not ill."

Then Timea would bid him good-night, and go away without even having laid her hand on his forehead.

Timar could not sleep. He heard every rustle in the house, and he asked himself how he should escape from himself. Gladly would he have entered the kingdom of dreams, but that is not so easily reached as the kingdom of death; for the dream-world does not admit one who would force his way into it. Opium? That is a good thing! It is the suicide of sleep.

The night grew darker, and at last shadows like those of the lower world surrounded him. It was a darkness that could be felt. And Timar knew that he slept, and he had a full consciousness that he was dreaming. He knew that he was lying in his bed at Komorn, and that beside him stood the table, with its bronze Chinese lamp and its old painted porcelain shade, and above his bed a large musical clock. About him silken curtains fell to the floor. Under his heavy old-fashioned and carved bed there was a trundle-bed, which could be drawn out at pleasure; such a bed as one often sees in old houses in rooms where a whole family could spend the night together. Timar knew in his dream that he had left the chamber-door unlocked, and that anyone could come in at will. Suddenly he fancied that the door opened, and that a person entered. The bed-curtains stirred, and somebody bent over him. It was a woman, and Timar spoke in his dream, "Is it you, Naomi?" and then he was frightened. "How came you here? What if anyone should see you!"

It was dark; nobody could see. He was aware that someone sat down on the edge of the bed and listened to his breathing. So had Naomi done all through the long winter nights.

"Have you followed me here, to take care of me? That is sweet of you, Naomi! But you must go back at once; no one must see you in the daylight."

The clock struck. It was midnight. The person by the bedside rose to stop the pendulum, lest the clock with its music should wake the sleeping man. But to do this she had to lean over the bed, so that Timar could hear her heart beat.

"How softly your heart throbs," he said in his dream. Then it seemed as if the watcher was about to strike a

light, and he cried out, "Do not do that. It is madness. Somebody might look through the window and see you!"

But the night-lamp was burning, and though Timar did not see the face of the woman, he knew that it must be Naomi. Who else would care to watch over him?

She put the shade over the light, so that the flame should not shine in the eyes of the sick man.

"Naomi, are you going to sit up all night to watch over me?" he asked feebly, and, as if to answer the question, she pulled out the trundle-bed and lay down upon it.

"Ah, you are going to stay beside me! How I love you!" he whispered, and longed to kiss and embrace her; but his limbs and his tongue were as if paralysed.

The woman slept now, and Timar's dream went on. His visions led him from the past to the future, and to the realm of the invisible; yet ever they returned to this woman's form. He dreamed that he was awake, and that this phantom shape was still beside him.

At last the dawn began to creep in: the sun's first beams shone in at the window.

"Wake up! wake up!" cried Timar in his sleep. "Go home. You must not be seen here! Leave me now!" And with a sudden energy he broke the spell of slumber, and woke to reality.

It was morning. The sunbeams stole through the curtains; the lamp still burned under its porcelain shade. In the little bed a sleeping woman lay, with her head resting on her arm.

"Naomi!" whispered Timar.

At the call the sleeper woke.

"Do you want anything?" said the woman, rising from her couch. The sound of Timar's voice had roused her; but she had not heard his words.

It was Timea.

Timar thought he was still dreaming. He looked at his wife in amazement. How could it be that Naomi had been transformed to Timea?

"Timea!" he said, half dazed with sleep.

"Yes, I am here," she answered.

"How is it possible?" cried Michael, still bewildered by his visions.

Timea answered gently—



"I was troubled about you, and fearing that you might be worse in the night, I wanted to be near you."

Timea's voice and manner were full of a tenderness that could not be counterfeited. The woman's instinct was loyalty itself.

Michael came to complete consciousness. His first feeling was terror; his second, self-reproach.

This poor woman, who had spent her night at his bedside, was the widow of a living husband. She had never had a joy in common with him; but now, when he was ill and suffering, she had come to him to share his sorrows and pain. And he must go on with the everlasting lies! He could not accept this generosity and tenderness.

"Timea," he said, "you must not do this again. I cannot permit you to watch at my bedside. I fear my disease is a contagious one; the Eastern plague, I think, I have contracted in my travels. I am afraid lest you too should catch it, so I beg of you to keep away from me both by day and night. I need nothing; and I must positively forbid you to come near me in future."

Timea sighed, and cast her eyes down; then she rose and left the room. She had not undressed herself, but had lain all night at the feet of the sick man with her clothes on.

As she left the room Timar rose. He felt shaken to the very soul. The longer he lived his double life the more impossible he found the burden of his double duties. He had made himself responsible for the fate of two noble and unselfish women. Both were wretched because of him, and he most wretched of all because of them. What was to be done? If one of them had been a vulgar and commonplace creature, whom he could have hated, despised, and paid off with money! But no. Both were high-souled beings, whose unhappy lives were so heavy an indictment against him that he had no defence to offer for himself.

How could he speak to Timea of Naomi? How could he speak to Naomi of Timea?

Would that he could divide all his possessions between them; and give to one all his wealth, to the other all his heart! But that was impossible. If one of them had been but faithless and ignoble! But no; each was a woman worthy of any man's reverence!

The life at home made Michael still more ill and wretched.

At last Timea consulted a physician, and the result of this was that Timar was advised to go to some watering-place, to try the effect of the springs in getting rid of the poison in his system. Timar replied that he did not wish to be where there was a crowd of people. And it was finally decided that he should go to one of his own summer houses near the Platten See, which he had bought at the time when he first engaged in the fisheries there. The physician approved of this, for the air of that region is most pure and invigorating.

The house at Balaton was a lonely one; no dwellings were in its vicinity, except a monastery on a high mountain on an island in the Platten See, where seven monks lived above a crypt full of royal and other dead men's bones.

To this spot came Timar in search of health. He brought with him only one servant, and he soon sent him away, preferring to be waited upon by the old keeper of the house, a man who was half blind and wholly deaf.

All day long Timar would sit on the shore of the Platten See, looking out on its flat green surface, upon which no boat, no ship, no sail was to be seen. It was like another Dead Sea. It had a twofold effect: it strengthened the body and weakened the soul.

The autumn drew near its close. But the long nights had their own melancholy charm, the starry heavens and the changing moon. Timar had a telescope, and spent long hours gazing at the planets, especially the moon, that world on which nothing living could exist. That orb, on which there was neither pain nor pleasure, was worse to him than hell. And yet something whispered to Timar that he must be one of the inhabitants of this world of nothingness, where, as Naomi believed, the souls of self-murderers must have their eternal abode. From his wretched life there seemed no other exit.

He had brought all his woe upon himself. He lived two contradictory lives. He had bound himself to two women, from neither of whom he could get free. He worshipped Timea; and he loved Naomi with all his soul. With one he suffered, with the other he was happy. One was a saint, the other his real wife.

As he recalled his past, he asked himself where he had first done wrong. Was it when he took Timea's fortune for his own? when he had married her? or when he had in

his despair entered into Naomi's life, and found happiness in her love?

To the first question he made answer to his conscience that he had saved Timea's fortune and given it back to her; and for the second, he had also an apology to offer: he had married Timea for love, and had believed that she gave him her hand willingly. How could he know that she loved another? He did not know that having loved once she could never love again. But to the third question he had no good answer to make. "If you had known," he said to himself, "that a man stood between you and your wife, you might have killed that interloper and have so won your wife's respect. Women do not like to be knelt to by a man as a slave, but to be won by him as a conqueror. But you bought Timea, and have made her a victim, who, like a ghost, lifts her living face from the grave to reproach you daily. Even now, if you had the courage to go to her and say, 'Timea, I am your evil genius, let us sever our bond,' perhaps she might set you free; and yet he feared that she would reply, 'I swore to be true to you, and I will keep my oath.'"


Day after day the temptation to suicide grew stronger and stronger in the breast of this wretched man. At last his design was fully settled upon. Late in the season he returned to Komorn; every one who met him congratulated him on his restoration to health: Timea alone saw that something was amiss, and asked him again and again what she could do for him. But this tenderness of his wife, which had been called out by his illness, only drove him the more eagerly to thoughts of suicide. Every would-be suicide is a madman, and every madman fears to betray himself. Timar took the utmost pains to disguise his moods and his purpose. He made his will, and left all his possessions to Timea and the poor. But he took pains to provide for Timea in case of her marriage after his death, and also for the possibility of her having children by a second marriage; and, in case of her descendants coming to want, he left an income of 1,000 gulden in trust for them. Then he resolved, as soon as the season permitted, to give out the report that he was going to Egypt, but really he meant to go to No Man's Land. There he would take his life; and, if he could persuade Naomi to die with him, they

two would go out of the world together. And he felt sure she would consent; for what was life to her if her beloved Michael were not in the world. Life would be worthless to her in such a case; and so they two would go to join their little Dodi.

The greatest misery of a diseased mind is, that it reads in the glances of others a conviction that its secret is discovered. Timar saw people look askance at him, and at times he felt inclined to spring from his chair and take the gazers by the throat. When Johann Fabula one day had a visit from a Church dignitary, who came to thank him for a gift of money, Timar had hard work to keep himself from putting both hands on the Vice-Curator's shoulders and jumping leap-frog over his head! There was something in the madman's look that made people's blood run cold. Athalie felt it; for Timar stared at her beauty in the strangest way. She had the neck and bust of a Venus; and Timar would look at her lovely person with the thought, "O, if I might but seize her by the white swan-like satin-smooth neck, and strangle her!" No wonder Athalie trembled before him. Timea alone had no fear of him.

But at last Timar could wait no longer for the slow spring to come before he should take his departure. He gave a great entertainment just before he left home: he invited everybody of whose name he had ever heard; and he said to Johann Fabula, "If I drink enough to make me unconscious, put me into a post-chaise and start me off on my journey."

But towards morning, when many guests were intoxicated, Timar was still sober. Madmen are as little affected by wine as King Mithridatus was by poison. But Timar's mind was full of strange visions, which he hardly knew whether to class as realities or dreams. It seemed to him that he had stood beside a bed on which a marble statue lay; that he had kissed its cold mouth, and it had not stirred. Again, that a maiden had met him as he left the house and asked him, "Whither are you going?" and that he had replied, "I am going to make my wife happy;" whereupon this figure had changed into a Medusa's head, with snakes hissing at him. At noon he woke to find himself far from Komorn, travelling in his own carriage. But his resolution to commit suicide was unchanged. Late at night he reached the Lower



Danube, where he was accustomed to go across to No Man's Land. A little later he was ferried over to the familiar spot.

One thought possessed him—What if Naomi were dead! The hope to find her no longer alive delighted him. If she were gone, he need not persuade her to die with him. Perhaps beside the white rose tree that bloomed above Dodi's grave a red one now was planted above Naomi; and in a little while there might be a yellow one, fit for the mound above a man in whose hands all turned to gold.

It was still night when he landed; the moon was shining brightly; the half-built house stood like a sepulchre in its grass-grown ground; the doors and windows were covered with matting to keep out the snow and rain. Timar hastened to the cave-dwelling. Almirus met him, licked his hands, but did not bark, and taking his coat in his teeth led him to the window.

The moonbeams lighted up the little chamber. Timar could see that there was but one bed in the room, and Theresa was asleep alone in it. His wish had been granted. Naomi lay under the roses!

He rapped on the window—

"Theresa, I am here!"

At the summons the woman came out into the verandah.

"You sleep alone, now, Theresa?"

"Yes; quite alone!"

"Naomi then has gone to join Dodi?"

"No; Dodi has come back to Naomi!"

Timar gazed in astonishment at Theresa. She took him by the hand, and led him sportively behind the house to the other little chamber. That too was bright, for a night-lamp burned in it.

Timar looked in and saw Naomi asleep, clasping to her breast a slumbering, golden-haired babe.

"What does this mean?" he whispered.

Theresa sighed softly—

"Do you not see? It is the little Dodi. He longed to come back to us. He said earth was better than heaven to him. He said to the good God, 'You have angels enough here, let me go back to my mother;' and the good God sent him to us."

"What!"

"Yes; it is the old story—the orphan child of a smuggler's widow; and we took him as we did before."

Timar trembled all over, as if he were in an ague-fit.

"Do not wake them till morning," whispered Theresa ; "it is bad for a child to be roused out of sleep. Can't you have patience?"

Timar answered not a word. He flung off his hat, threw aside his coat, and rolled his shirt-sleeves up to his shoulders.

Theresa thought he was mad. But no, he was sane! He ran to the half-built house, tore the matting down from the doors and windows, opened his tool-chest, and began to work.

Just then the first streaks of daylight brightened the sky.

Naomi dreamed that someone was working again on the unfinished house. She heard the sound of the plane as it smoothed the hard timbers, and in the pauses of the workman she heard a song—

"The house of my darling is dearer to me
Than the king's palace at Ofen."

And when she woke the plane was shoved by a man's strong arm, and the song was sung by a man's strong voice.

BOOK V.

T H E R E S A.



CHAPTER I

THERESA.

It had been Timar's fate to rob everybody with whom he had been associated. He had robbed Timea of her father's millions, then of her own love-dream, and at last of loyalty in marriage. He had robbed Naomi of her heart, her womanly honour, and of herself. He had robbed Theresa, who despised mankind, of her last vestige of faith in man. He had taken No Man's Land from her, and had given it back to her in order to win her gratitude. He had robbed Theodore Kristyan of the old world, and banished him by stratagem to another hemisphere. He had robbed Athalie of father, mother, bridegroom, home, and all her possessions in this world or the next. He had robbed Katschuka of his earthly happiness. He had robbed himself of self-respect, although all who knew him esteemed him. He had won the gratitude of the poor, the thanks of orphans, decorations from the king—and all these were stolen goods. He had robbed the smugglers of faith in human beings; for they had been deceived when they kept his secret. He had stolen from God Himself, when he had led astray an angel from heaven.

Even his own soul did not belong to him, for he had mortgaged it to the moon; and yet he did not redeem the pledge which he had given to that orb. He had the poison all ready which was to take him to the world of nothingness. The fiends rejoiced at his coming, and yet he fooled them. He robbed even the devil of his own.

He had escaped from the world into a paradise, and had tasted of the forbidden fruit: in this new Eden he had

despised all the laws of men—whether made by priests, kings, judges, or soldiers. He had robbed everybody of vested rights; and yet everything he did succeeded.

How long could this go on?

He could deceive everybody but one person, and that was himself. How gladly would he have been what he seemed to be! But this was impossible. Had he only deserved his great wealth, the universal respect, and the tender love—all which were his by theft—how happy he would have been!

He had a moral nature which longed for honesty, human respect, philanthropy, and self-sacrifice; but by a strange and sad destiny he had, through temptations too great for him to withstand, become a man whom others esteemed and honoured, but who must despise himself as the veriest hypocrite.

And fate, too, must bestow upon him, after a severe illness, such new vigour that nothing could injure him! Instead of growing old through his long sickness, he seemed to grow younger; and all summer long he busied himself with the work of a day-labourer. He finished the little house which he had begun, and then set about furnishing it by the skill of his own hands. He was an expert cabinetmaker, as well as a house-builder and carpenter. It was a marvel to see how beautiful the little dwelling became under Timar's hands. There was in him the making of a great artist.

The pillars which supported the verandah of the new house were each of a different style. One was made of two twisted snakes, whose heads formed the capital of the column; another was like a palm tree, around which ivy was entwined; a third was a cluster of vines, from which lizards and squirrels peeped out; and a fourth was a group of reeds springing out of a mass of acanthus leaves. Within the house, the decorations and furniture were rich with artistic carvings. Tables and chairs were ornamented with bright mosaics, in which the various coloured woods of the trees that grew on the island were utilised. The doors and window-frames were all made so as to push inside the walls or shove up, and were fastened with wooden bars; for Timar had resolved that nothing should be in the house which was not the work of his own hands, and so there was not a bit of iron work in it, not even a nail. But the window-panes worried him. How could he replace glass? And yet he must do it to carry out his plan of building the house all himself,

and from the materials on the island. At first he thought of weaving cotton cloth for the windows; but this would not be suitable for winter. Then he thought of using bladders, as the Esquimaux do; but this he rejected as not in keeping with the beauty of the house. At last he found, in a part of the rocks on the island, a stratum of mica, which he carefully took out and slowly separated into thin and transparent sheets, which he set into a framework of laths. It was a task suitable for a prisoner, and yet this rich man had the patience to perform it!

But what a delight it was, when the house was done, to lead his darling into it, and say, "All this is the work of my own hands. A king himself could not offer such a gift to his queen."

Dodi the second was four years old when the building was finished and named "Dodi's house."

Timar's next duty was to teach Dodi to read. The child was an active, healthy, and sweet-natured boy. Timar was resolved to be his instructor in everything, not only in books, but in gymnastics and all physical exercises, and to make him a good carpenter as well—for a mechanic can earn his bread everywhere.

Timar felt as if all was now so arranged for the future that this life could go on for ever, when suddenly Fate cried, "Halt!"

Only eight years before, when Timar first discovered No Man's Land, both Naomi and Timea had been children. Now Naomi was twenty-two years of age, Timea twenty-one, and Athalie twenty-five. Theresa was just entering her forty-fifth year, Timar himself was forty-two, and little Dodi just five years old. But one of this group was near the end of a life which had been full of suffering. This was Theresa.

One summer evening, when Naomi and her child were walking about together, Theresa said to Timar—

"Michael, I must tell you something. The autumn will not find me here. I know that I must die. For twenty years past I have suffered from a disease of the heart, which will soon kill me. It is a mortal disease, but I have concealed it from others and never complained of it. I have borne it with patience, and it has been checked in its progress by your love and the happiness which you have brought into my life. Had it been otherwise, I should long since have been in my

grave. But for a year past I have grown worse. I cannot sleep at night. As soon as I go to bed I have to get up again; and I shall find no rest till I sink into that last deep sleep of death.

"I can hear my heart beat all day long. It beats violently three or four times, and then for the space of a beat-and-a-half it stops and stands still; then again it slowly begins to throb, and then this thumping repeats itself. The end is near. Often everything swims before my eyes, and it requires all my strength of will to enable me to stand up. This cannot last longer than the summer. I am not sorry to die. I die content. I ask nothing of you, Michael; I claim no promise from you. Words are empty sounds; acts are the best pledges for the future. You feel what you are to Naomi, and what she is to you. What have I to worry me? I can die without troubling God even with a prayer. What could I ask of Him more than He has already bestowed upon me? Am I not right, Michael?"

Timar bowed his head. Here was the realisation of a fear which had often haunted his fancy. He had observed that Theresa was failing in health; he had read in her face the signs of that conflict which lays hold on the body where it is most closely allied to the soul—in the heart. And he had trembled as he thought of the possibility that Theresa might die. What then would become of Naomi? Could he leave her, as he had been accustomed to do, all winter long with her child on this lonely island? Who would take care of her, and comfort her if Theresa were gone? Often he had banished these thoughts, but now he stood helpless before them; he could no longer escape from his anxieties.

Theresa had spoken only the truth. On the afternoon of that same day, as a huckster woman from the mainland came to buy some fruit, and they were bargaining over the full baskets, Theresa fell fainting to the ground. They brought her to herself; but on the third day, when the same woman came again for fruit, Theresa fainted again. The fruit-dealer expressed great sympathy for the poor woman, and said it would be well for her, since she was so ill, to have a priest to confess her.

Timar thought often of his late conversation with Theresa. He thought not only that she was Naomi's mother and her sole protector in his absence, but that she was a noble soul

chosen by Fate, as the Prophet Job had been, to bear a whole arsenal of temptations; and yet she had not sunk beneath this burden: she had not given way to despair, but she had suffered and worked in silence. Her life and her death proved what she had borne and accomplished. And then Timar thought that perhaps destiny had brought him into this woman's life in order that her great sorrow might be assuaged by him, and that the vast mass of his own failures—sins and anguish which in the great world lay hidden under a pyramid of lies—might find expiation on this little island; for whatever there was of virtue, truth, or honour in his life was confined to this small strip of land.

The longer he saw Theresa silently bear her sufferings, the more clearly he seemed to hear the word of prophecy in his own heart, that with the death of this woman a great inheritance would fall upon him—the burden which Theresa had borne, and the greatness of soul with which she had borne it.

Naomi had no idea that her mother's illness was a mortal one. She thought that the extreme heat had been the cause of her fainting-fits. And Theresa told her also that such an illness was not unusual with women at her time of life.

During all this time Timar redoubled his tenderness towards Theresa. He would not allow her to do any work. He kept Dodi away from her, lest his sports and prattle should disturb her; but in spite of this care she grew steadily worse.

As the summer drew to its close, the cooler days seemed to bring her some relief, but it was only in appearance. The attacks of faintness returned, and the friendly fruit-dealer began again to repeat that it was time for Theresa to confess and receive the last sacrament.

One day all four were seated at dinner in the front room, when the barking of Almirus gave notice that some stranger was coming. Theresa looked out of the window, and then said to Timar, "Go into the back room, so that nobody need see you."

Timar looked hastily out, and thought it well indeed that he should not meet the man who was approaching, for it was Schandorowitsch, the dean, who had been decorated, and who would have recognised Herr von Levetinczy at once, and have found out altogether too many things.

"Push the table aside," said Theresa, "and leave me alone;" and, as if her strength had suddenly returned to her, she helped

to put the table into the next room. When the reverend dean entered the chamber Theresa was all alone in it. She had put her bed against the door which led into the other apartment, and she was sitting on the edge of her bed. In this way all exit was cut off from the back room.

The clergyman had a long beard, which was streaked with gray, but his cheeks were red and his figure vigorous and erect. The attendants and sacristan, who accompanied him, remained without on the verandah, trying to make friends with the dog. The dignified prelate entered the house alone, holding out his hand, as if he would give an opportunity to anyone who wished to kiss it. But Theresa neglected to avail herself of this privilege, which did not put the dean in the best of humours.

"Perhaps you do not know who I am, you sinful woman!"

"I know very well who you are, and I know too that I am a sinner. But what brings you here?"

"What should bring me here, you chattering old witch? You heathenish woman! You do not know me!"

"I do know you well. You are that priest who refused burial to my poor dead husband."

"Yes, because he died in his sins, without having confessed and received absolution. For that reason when he died he was buried like a dog. If you do not want to be buried in the same way, make haste and confess your sins and be absolved while there is yet time. To-morrow or the next day you must die. A pious woman told me of your condition, and besought me to come to you before it was too late. You may thank her for that."

"Speak lower. My daughter is in the next room. Do not grieve her."

"You have a daughter; and there is a man here and a child."

"That is true."

"And this man is the husband of your daughter?"

"Yes."

"Who married them?"

"The same who united Adam and Eve—God."

"You are mad, woman! That never happened on earth but once. Then there was neither priest nor altar. But now things are not managed so easily. You have broken the laws."

"I know that. But men's laws drove me to this desert island, and here their laws have no force."

"Are you a heathen?"

"I have lived in peace; let me die in peace!"

"And you have brought up your only child to a life of shame!"

"What do you mean by shame?"

"The contempt of all men worthy of respect."

"Would that make me any warmer or colder?"

"Wretched creature! Have the pains of your body taught you nothing? Do you not think of the fate of your soul? I have come to show you the way into the kingdom of heaven, and you persist in going to hell. Do you not believe in God, or in the resurrection?"

"I know nothing of a future life, nor do I desire to live again. I hope to sleep quietly under one of my trees. I hope to turn to dust there, so that the root of the tree may absorb me and turn me into a leaf on its branches. I want no other future life than that. I would like to live in the sap of a tree which I myself have planted. I do not believe in a pitiless God, who compels His creatures to suffer even after this life. My God is a compassionate being, who gives rest to grass, trees, and mankind in death."

"But He gives no rest to such a hardened sinner as you are. You will be flung into hell, and into the jaws of the devil!"

"Show me in the Holy Scriptures when God created hell and the devil, and I may believe you."

"O you base woman! Do you even deny the devil?"

"Indeed I deny him. God never created him. You have invented him to frighten us mortals. And you have blundered in making him. You have given him a cloven foot and two horns; and such a beast lives only on grass, and could not devour men."

"Lead us not into temptation! Who knows but the earth will open and swallow you up, as it did Dathan and Abiram! And do you bring up the little child in such unbelief?"

"That is a matter which concerns only the man to whom the child belongs—the father of the boy."

"And what is this man's name?"

"Michael."

"What is his last name?"

"I have never asked him."

"You have never asked him! What then do you know of this man?"

"I know that he is an honourable man, and loves Naomi."

"But what is he? A sailor, a peasant, a gentleman?"

"A poor man, as befits our condition."

"But what further? I must know more; it is my right. Is he a Papist, a Lutheran, or a Jew?"

"I have never troubled myself to enquire."

"Have you kept no fasts?"

"Yes; for two years I ate no meat, because I had none."

"But who baptised the child?"

"God, when He sent a tempest, and then set a rainbow in the midst of it."

"O you heathen!"

"Heathen!" retorted Theresa, bitterly. "Here on this island you find no worshipper of idols or graven images. We do not worship even those images which all the rest of the world adore. The gold and silver coins on which the two-headed eagle is stamped are worshipped everywhere."

"You old witch! You dare jest about sacred things!"

"No; I speak most seriously. God's heaviest blows fell upon me, and from the greatest happiness I was suddenly plunged into the deepest misery. One day I was made a widow and a beggar. But I did not deny God—I did not fling away the life He had bestowed upon me. I came here into the desert. I sought for God, and I found Him. But my God desires no gaudy vestments, no bell-rings, no incense. He asks only a heart resigned to His will. My repentance did not show itself in wreaths or candles, but in work. Men had left me nothing upon the earth, and yet I did not leave the world by my own hand, for I came to this desert island and made it a blooming meadow. Everybody had cheated, deceived, and robbed me. The laws of men had plundered me, good friends had stolen from me, priests had insulted me; but I hated no man. I have lived here, and helped the poor and needy, who came to me for succour. I sleep all the year round with open doors, for I have nothing to fear from evil men. I am no heathen!"

"What useless and idle talk is this! I asked you only what the name of the man is who lives here with you, and why

"This child is not baptised. It is impossible that you do not know the name of your daughter's husband."

"Be it so. I will not lie. I do know his name, but nothing more. His life may have its secrets, as mine has. Mine I have told you; as to his, I have never pried into them. He may have good reasons for concealment; but I know him only as a good and honourable man. I had fine friends and respectable ones, who robbed me of everything save a weeping child. I brought up this child, my one treasure, my comfort, the light of my life; and I allowed her to choose for herself a husband, of whom I know nothing, save that he loved her and was beloved by her. Have I not proved my faith in God?"

"Don't talk to me of faith. For such faith witches were burnt at the stake in the good old times of true Christianity."

"Luckily this island is not under Christian jurisdiction. I own it by right of a Firman from the Sultan of Turkey."

"And who brought that to you!" cried the astonished dean.

"That very man whose name you cannot find out!"

"But I will find it out—and that quickly. I will call the sacristan and my attendants here. I will pull your bed away, and break open the door behind it."

Timar, in the next room, heard all. The blood rushed to his temples at the thought that the dean would in a moment stand face to face with him, and cry out, "Is it you, most noble Michael von Levetinczy, of the King's Privy Council!"

The priest opened the door, and called to his attendants.

Theresa wrapped the Turkish coverlid of her bed about her person.

"Sir," said she to the dean, "favour me with one word, that I may prove to you that I am no heathen, but have strong faith in God. Look, this coverlid of woollen stuff is from Brussa. It was given me a short time since by a travelling merchant. The plague has been raging for four weeks past in Brussa, and yet I have faith enough in God to wrap this woollen spread about me. Who of you has faith enough in God to come close to it and my bed?"

Nobody answered this question; for on the discovery that this bed-covering had been brought from plague-stricken Brussa, all the pious people ran pell mell not only from the door, but made haste to quit the island. The place would now have an evil reputation, which would protect it from

further invasion from all who desired to live any length of time.

Theresa could now allow her family to come out of their hiding-place. Timar kissed her hand, and said to her, "My mother!" Theresa looked into his eyes, and whispered, "My son!" But her gaze said, "Remember what you have heard in this hour."

"And now," said she, "let us make ready for my departure." She spoke of her death always as of a journey. "I shall go in October," she said, "in that lovely time when the trees shed their leaves."

She selected the last garment which she should wear, and in which she should be wrapped and laid in the earth. She refused to have any coffin, and, leaning on Timar's and Naomi's arms, she went to show them the place where she wished to lie.

"Here, in this meadow," she said; and she took Timar's spade to mark out the exact spot. "You have built a house for Dodi, now make one for me; but heap up no mound above me, and put no cross at my head. Do not plant a flower or tree on my grave. Let the spot be overgrown with grass, so that it may look like the rest of the meadow. I wish it to be so. I do not want it to be possible that anyone who is happy should come upon my grave, and shudder, and be reminded of death."

And Timar made ready Theresa's house. Nor did the mother once ask him, "Who are you, and to what manner of man do I intrust my Naomi?"

One evening she fell asleep for ever. They buried her, as she had directed. Wrapped in a white garment she was laid beneath a nut tree, and the spot covered with turf, to make it as smooth and like the rest of the meadow as possible. And when, a few days later, Timar and Naomi, leading Dodi by the hand, went by the spot, the level green meadow showed no grave. And yet someone found out the place where Theresa lay. It was Almirus, who went before the little group, and laid his head on one spot in the green meadow. This was the mother's grave.

Timar asked himself, if with this grave the world had not closed for him? Was it not time for him to make away with himself, and should he do it here or there?

CHAPTER II.

THE BROKEN SWORD.

Timar remained on the island till autumn had well set in. The nightingales and blackbirds had left their summer nests, but he waited till the trees were stripped of their foliage. Then he made up his mind to go back into the world of work and activity. He left Naomi solitary and alone on No Man's Land—alone with her innocent child.

“But I shall be back before winter is over.”

With these words he bade her good-bye.

Naomi hardly knew what “winter” meant as it existed in Timar's home. The Danube never froze in the neighbourhood of the island. The laurel and the ivy were ever green, and the thermometer never reached the freezing point.

Michael's journey was anything but pleasant. He had not gone far before he encountered snow. At Neu Szöny, opposite Komorn, he was compelled to wait over a day; for the ice was not solid yet, and nobody was willing to drive over the river, which rocked like a cradle.

There was a time when Timar risked all dangers of the angry stream. Things were different then: Naomi was expecting him on the other side. Now, he was only going home to Timea.

Still he was not dilatory under present circumstances. As soon as the ice ceased rocking, he was the first to cross on foot. He had a distinct purpose in his mind, and the sooner it was accomplished the better for them all.

He must make a formal separation from Timea. That was

decisive. Naomi had been so loving, as well as true, that he must recognise her rights as the mother of his child. It was more than cruelty to compel her to remain longer unprotected on that desolate island.

And Timea would be happier too. He was too human and too selfish not to be affected by this thought. If he could only hate her! If he only had good cause to forget her!

Ruminating after this fashion he reached home on foot. He was compelled to leave his carriage at Neuzöny, for the ice of the Danube was not yet strong enough to bear so heavy a weight.

As he entered the house it seemed to him that Timea grew a trifle frightened at sight of him. The hand of welcome she reached out to him quivered. Even her voice was slightly tremulous, and she waived the usual formality of offering her pale cheek for a kiss. He hastened to his room to change his stained travelling suit for fresh attire. What was all this fright? Timar noticed another sign—Athalie's countenance. In her dark eyes blazed the old demoniacal fire of wicked intelligence. He did not appear again till dinner time. They ate in silence, but digested with their food a threefold secret.

After the meal, Timea said coldly—

“You stayed away longer than usual.”

The remark called for no special reply, so he made none, though he thought, “The next stay will be indefinite as eternity.”

He was in an irritated mood, and gave orders peremptorily that no one was to see him. He wished to be left alone to attend to business matters. His business matters, if one could have looked within and read what was going on there, proved to be none other than a brooding over the question, how he should make the formal demand for the wished-for unavoidable separation? General incompatibility and unconquerable aversion were the causes upon which he magnanimously settled—causes which would appear to his lawyers and the world sufficient grounds for divorce.

Toward evening the door leading into his room was cautiously opened. He turned angrily round, and was about to ring for a servant to know why his simple request was unheeded, when he saw Athalie close beside him. In her eye was the same



victorious, exultant light, and on her lips played the taunting smile which had once driven him out of his own house.

"What is it, Athalie?" he asked, half embarrassed.

"Hm! Baron Levetinczy, what do you suppose I wish?"

"I have no means of conjecturing that."

"But I know what you would like most."

"I?"

"Would you not be pleased to obtain a little valuable information from a reliable source?"

"What?" whispered Timar, anxiously. Suddenly taken off his guard, he stepped forward to shut the door which his visitor had thoughtlessly left open.

"It is not easily guessed," continued the beautiful woman, still smiling. "How long have I been here now?"

"In my house, do you mean?"

"Well, yes; since it has become yours?"

No answer.

"Six years, isn't it? Every year I have had an opportunity of studying you in a new character. The first year it was anxious fear. This gave way to a happy-go-lucky flow of good spirits. The third year you disported in a feigned contentment and restfulness, which was followed by a tyrannical mood and narrow prejudices. These phases were all motives for study to me. Last year I feared for the consequences; you had a habit of staring into futurity, as if you were penetrating the depths of your tomb. But you know yourself nobody has prayed more earnestly for your good health than I."

Timar frowned. Before he could speak, or bring this useless interview to a close, she added—

"No; however much you might wish it otherwise, I desire your life more than any other one thing in this world—more this moment than ever before. I discover in your face the old anxiety of the first year of your marriage. Wouldn't you like to know something tangible about Timea?"

"Do you really know anything? Out with it!"—and he placed himself against the door, as if he would make Athalie his prisoner.

She laughed in her maddening fashion. She well knew he was the prisoner instead. After a pause, with emphasis and triumph, she answered—

"I know a great deal. Everything, in fact."

"Everything?"

"Yes; enough to send each and every one of us to destruction—Timea, you, and me."

The blood began to boil in Timar's veins.

"Have you actually any information to communicate?"

"That is my errand to you. But you must listen to me uninterruptedly. I shall tell you things that can drive you to insanity, yet you must control yourself to the very end."

"I beg of you, cut this short. Only one word. Has Timea been unfaithful to me?"

"She has. I repeat it, she has. You will soon have proofs to substantiate this declaration."


A nobler feeling in Timar's heart protested against this outspoken suspicion.

"Athalie, think, I beg of you, what a dreadful thing you are uttering."

"I shall only give you *facts*. You may verify these by ocular demonstration. If you then choose to quarrel with your five senses, I cannot help it. We are not slandering our holy saint without fair cause."

"I am listening. Still, I do not believe you, remember."

"I shall speak in spite of that. A few days ago your saintly virgin stepped out of her sacred frame and wandered in earthly places to hear something more of a rumour that had reached her ears, and which had been generally trumpeted through the town. This was to the effect that the knightly major, her old admirer, had fought a duel with a strange officer on your account, and whom he had severely wounded in the encounter. It is said that the major broke his sword ruthlessly over your libeller's head. Mrs. Sophie told this nice little scandal to your saint; it really brought tears to her eyes. But stop! You are a heretic, and do not believe in weeping saints. But she did weep. This impressive incident pleased Mrs. Sophie, so she related it to the major the next day. You know she enjoys nice little morsels of gossip. It is a pleasant entertainment to her to reconcile secret lovers, separated from force of circumstances, at the same time sowing seeds of discord where possible harmony may exist. It is a true home-missionary spirit to provide joy for the one and bitterness for the other. Mrs. Sophie is *my mother*."



Athalie wiped her lips after the word "mother," as if she had removed something nauseating from her mouth.

"The result of all these affecting tears was that Mother Sophie brought Timea a letter and a box from the kind-hearted major."

"What was in the box?"

"It is not so important for you to know what was in the box as what the letter contained. In the box lay the half of the broken sword, the part with the handle, with which the gallant major had fought—a little souvenir."

"Very well," said Timar; "I see nothing objectionable about that."

"No! But the letter—ah, the letter!"

"Have you read it?"

"No; but I know what was in it."

"How can you be sure of it, if you have not read it?"

"Because the saint answered it, and Mamma Sophie acted as bearer. You may be sure that she would know the contents. The letter was written right here, at your own desk, sealed with your own signet. It might have been a refusal to see him, but it was not."

"Who can know that?"

"Mother Sophie and your humble servant; and you too, presently. How could you come at such an unexpected moment. Everybody is cutting and packing Baron Levettinczy's ice to-day. No human being dares to cross the river. One would suppose to-day, if ever, Komorn would be safe from travellers across the Danube; that even an uneasy husband would scarce risk his precious life. How could you come to-day?"

"Do not keep me in suspense, Athalie."

"Did you not notice the saint's confused expression at your unlooked-for arrival? Mrs. Sophie was on her way to the knightly major, right after dinner, informing him in short order it could not be to-day."

At these words Timar's face showed rage and fright by turns. He sank spiritless into an arm-chair, and said, after a pause, "I do not believe one word."

"I do not oblige you to," said Athalie, shrugging her shoulders; "but I want to give you a bit of advice. What can't be done to-day may happen in the near future. You have to go to the Platten See every year to look after

the fisheries. 'If the cold continues,' you might say: incidentally to-morrow, 'I shall have to take a trip to Füred, and see how the fishermen are getting on.' Then, instead, you could go to the other house and wait for a slight tap on the lower sash, which would mean, 'Now is the time.' Then you could come back and see for yourself."

"*I am to do that?*" Timar felt a shock at the suggestion.

"Oh! I thought you were a man, with a man's passions, with a man's sense of his own rights as a husband. I see I am mistaken. Henceforth I have only pleasant things to say of the saint. She is not untrue to you. O, believe in her fully and entirely."

With this sarcasm she turned to go. As she reached the door she looked him steadily in the eye, and then, with all the power of her Iago-like nature, she threw into his wavering soul the words—

"You coward!"

They were not said in vain. Timar hurried after her, drew her half-unwilling hand back, and said—

"Stay; I have changed my mind. I will take your advice."

She yielded gracefully, and came so near that he could feel her breath on his cheek.

"When my father built this house the room now occupied by Timea was the guest-chamber, and the guests were usually the men with whom he had all kinds of business relations. They came often; ate and drank heartily; and, when they were 'properly primed,' as father used to say, he invited them into this room to chat and smoke by themselves. The room has the appearance of being cut off from the rest of the house, and so, when they were quite alone, with the doors closed and barred, their tongues ran freely, loosed by good wine. But father had an arrangement by which he obtained all the useful points of these edifying conversations, without anybody else being the wiser; for connected with that room is a secret chamber, accessible from the spiral staircase which helps to form it. The wall between this cozy hiding-place and Timea's sitting-room is apparently solid, and covered by the great St. George's picture, which has not been down for ages. Instead of this, there is really a large closet built in, where we can sit quietly behind the picture and hear all that is going on. Not only that, a secret panel—

known to me alone now—can be moved, and with that at one's command nothing can escape a jealous eye."

"But one could not enter the room from the secret chamber?"

"Oh yes! 'St. George and the Dragon,' although the picture is so solid-looking, is really movable, and is made up of geometrical forms, that slide into each other by means of a spring at the back, and—one, two, three—you stand in their midst like one dropped from the skies. There never was a more perfect arrangement."

"And you have always had access to Timea's room, day and night, in this manner?" he asked, with an involuntary shudder.

Athalie laughed a proud assent.

"I have never had occasion to use this device. You know yourself Timea always sleeps with unlocked doors."

"Give me the key to the chamber."

Athalie took from her pocket a sharply-pointed instrument, shaped like a screw, and explained that it needed but the slightest pressure in a particular figure of the wall-paper in the hall behind the staircase.

Timar's good angel whispered to him to drop the fatal key into the well, but Athalie's closing words choked off the impulse.

"To-morrow you may know everything. Can I rely upon you when I tap upon your office window?"

"I will be here."

The girl pressed Timar's hand passionately, and whispered something else into his ear. They were words that he either did not comprehend, or else he imagined without hearing. What did she say?

He looked up, as if he were shaking off the last vestige of a night-walking experience. He wanted to ask another question. He was entirely alone, no one was there, and in his hand lay the key that could not have dreamed itself into existence. He felt like a vagabond and a thief. He did not believe a word of Athalie's story, yet he was helpless, and could do nothing except what she had so skilfully prescribed.

He remained at home till noon. At table he remarked, in an indifferent manner, that business at the Platten See required his attention. He was arranging new leases of the fisheries.

He took leave with very little ado. On his way to the street he met a letter-carrier, with a special letter marked Rio de Janeiro. At another time this might have had great interest for him, but just now the flour trade on the other side of the world had neither interest nor pleasure for him.

In fact, nothing of a business nature had. He was willing to deceive Timea; he had planned to separate from her on account of incompatibility and uncontrollable aversion. That was one thing. Now his honour was at stake. He did not mind flinging away a treasure, but he did not care to have it stolen from him. Such an outrage stirred him to the very depths. The points of view were so very, very different.

He began to realise that she was a treasure. A faint feeling came over him that if she were human and had yielded, and now he was to see her in her unfaithfulness, whose the blame but her husband's? The more impressed he became with his own share in the guilt, the more decided he grew that it were well to be provided with a pistol or a dagger to avenge his wrongs. A man is so consistent!

While he was thinking all this he had reached the house in Raizen Street, and had taken a seat near the window in the private office. He had entered unobserved, and there was no danger of interruption or disturbance, for it was not generally known that he had returned. He sat in a stupor—he did not know how long a time. Meanwhile it was growing dark fast. One after another the lamps were lighted, and shone out in the gathering blackness. He could see the shadows of the passers-by come and go. At length there was a footstep, and a light rat-tat-tat followed on the lower pane of the frosted window. The frost-work trembled at the jar, and he almost heard it say, "Don't go; stay where no harm can befall anybody."

The tap was repeated. His self-control was gone, and he whispered in answer, "I am coming." It was but a few steps to the mansion. He returned as he came in the afternoon, without meeting a soul. There was a flitting shadow some distance ahead. He could not lose sight of it, and it controlled his direction, lest he grew faint-hearted and might retrace his steps.

He found the door open below, and on reaching the circular staircase he had no need to try his skill with the screw-like

key, for the papered wall opened, silently received him, and was shut again as if by magic.

He stumbled about in the dark for some minutes, when he discovered a wall that transmitted faint rays of light. He went close to it, and moved a small shell of which Athalie had told him. At the back of it was a small coloured glass panel, which furnished ample means for seeing everything in Timea's room. It was just in the middle of George and the Dragon, and looked directly through the heart of the valiant saint. Timea's favourite lamp stood on the centre table. Timea was walking up and down the room in a brown study. She had on a loose white embroidered dress. Her head was bent toward the floor, and her arms were folded as she walked. The door leading to her apartment opened, and Mrs. Sophie appeared. She whispered to Timea, but every word was audible in the secret chamber.

"May he come in?" asked the stout lady.

"I am awaiting him," replied Timea quietly.

Mrs. Sophie disappeared. Timea opened her writing table, and took from the drawer a box which she carried to the lamp. The rays of light fell full on her face while she lifted the cover and examined the contents. Timar could see distinctly what fastened her attention. It was the upper half of a sword with its handle.

She appeared to be much affected by the sight of the weapon. The first glance made her shrink, and those wonderful eyebrows quivered visibly. Gradually a pleasanter expression overspread her face, and she lifted the sabre close to her lips as if she would kiss it. The melancholy look was now completely gone; she grasped the sword man-fashion, and commenced to slash the air and fence with an imaginary adversary.

There was a knock.

Timea, frightened, like one who had been detected in a crime, hastily replaced the weapon in its casket. She took time to rearrange a tumbled sleeve before she said, "Come in."

It was Major Katschuka. Tall and handsome, he had improved with every year in looks.

Timea did not go forward to meet him. She remained standing near the lamp. Timar saw what he had never seen before. At sight of the major, her face was bathed in a

deep blush. The alabaster statue had life and blood in her veins after all. It was the first indication of deepseated feeling in Timea that had ever manifested itself to Timar. But no; on a second glance, it could not be, for her face had again assumed the pallor and the imperturbable expression which it usually wore.

With a slight bow, and with grave dignity, she invited the major to a chair. She betook herself to a sofa on the opposite side of the room. They looked at each other long in painful silence.

Timea spoke first.

"Your confidential letter and this box containing the broken sword are in my possession. You mention a duel fought the other day with a stranger, whose life you spared because this sword broke. You mention my husband twice in the letter. To vindicate him you challenged the man. It was on this account only that I have permitted the interview. I should like to know the facts from your lips. You will kindly confine yourself to Baron von Levetinczy. I shall be compelled to withdraw on the slightest reference to any other subject besides my husband."

The major bowed deferentially, and proceeded.

"For some days a stranger, dressed like a marine officer, has been visiting the various haunts belonging to our army men. He is good company, tells good stories, and appears to have seen a good deal of the world. He spends no end of money, and is very talkative, especially on the subject of his protracted stay in Komorn. He was waiting for Baron Levetinczy. He had a special mission, which required personal attention. He asked daily if Herr Timar had arrived yet, and with the interrogation always added an inuendo or a mysterious nod that we officers finally got sick of, and interpreted to be an intended affront to the baron. One evening we cornered the scamp, because we felt he was an interloper. I made up my mind to sift him to the bottom. He intimated several charges very derogatory to your husband. I said to him, 'Look here! nobody knows you, but there is not a soul in Hungary who cannot testify to the benevolence, honour, and strictest morality and integrity of Baron Levetinczy.'"

At these words Timea rose slowly, walked over to the major, and said, reaching him her hand, "I thank you sincerely."

Major Katschuka continued his story, and, not to discomfort his interested listener, he sought some other object upon which to fasten his eyes. They finally settled on the dragon's head in the picture of St. George. Where the eyeballs sank into the sockets of the serpent were the holes that furnished the eaves-dropper all the history and eulogium of himself. Timar could not but feel that every word of the major was directed to him personally.

"To proceed," he said; "when I had expressed my opinion of Herr Timar, this stranger started up in a violent rage. 'You believe all that? I promise you that three days after I have seen him, this model family-man, this exemplary citizen, will disappear from Komorn for ever. Neither his wife, his wealth, nor his business will ever see him more. Then you will know the man in his true colours.'"

Timea made a half start for the box that contained the sabre.

"Instead of answering the rascal," continued the major, "I slapped him in the face."

Timar took a step back, as if he were the recipient of the blow then.

"I suppose the fellow was sorry that he had said so much; but it was done. To be insulted in the presence of all our officers left him no alternative but to challenge me to a duel. We found seconds at once, and adjourned to the ball-room upstairs. The fellow fought like a pirate. He attempted to snatch my sword once or twice with his left hand. This angered me so that I levelled him with a stroke over the head. He fell, but luckily for him my weapon bent and snapped. Next day I enquired at the physician's as to his condition, and learned that he left town the same night. His wound could not have been serious."

Timea picked up the sword again, and looked it carefully over. She laid it down, stepped over to where the major was, and a second time said, "I thank you most sincerely," giving him her hand.

Katschuka took it tenderly, and pressed it lightly with his lips.

A long pause followed.

Major Katschuka broke the silence after a time—

"I did not seek this interview to pose as a hero. I only did my duty, and would do so again if the circumstances demanded it. Neither have I come for a reward. But I

came to ask you a serious question. Is it possible that there may be a shadow of truth in the fellow's statement? He spoke very confidently."

Timea started at these words.

Timar, too, felt them in his hiding-place.

"Sir, remember he is my husband."

"I have not told you all he said. If there is a word or grain of truth, there may be more; and if there be, I want to offer you my aid and protection."

Timar listened anxiously for the reply. It was the most critical moment of the interview. Timea was strong, and remained victor. She gathered all the strength of her soul together, and replied—

"Have no fears. There is not a word of truth in that adventurer's story. He has never seen my husband. I have carried on my husband's business in his absence, and I know that everything will bear noonday inspection. Not a penny of his vast wealth but is his by right and title. That I allowed you to finish your last sentence proves that I have a high regard for you. I need nobody's protection. No one has ever heard me utter a complaint. Nobody has seen me shed a tear. My husband is the noblest man that ever breathed. He took me, a stranger, saved my life as a helpless child. Three times he dared the angry waves for me. When I stayed at the house of my foster-father, he visited his mortal enemy daily to be of some service and protection to me—to save me from ridicule and ill treatment. When I was a beggar, a house servant—that is all I was in Herr Braso-witsch's family—he gave me a home. When he offered me his hand, it was not in jest; he *meant* to make me his wife."

She ran to a wardrobe, passionately opened the door, and took hold of a garment.

"Do you recognise this? It is the train dress, every stitch of which I embroidered, and every stitch in it is a buried illusion, a false hope. When it was done they said, 'It is not for you, silly one; it is for a real bride.' That stab was mortal. All these years I have borne the wound which would not heal.

"I brought my husband no dowry but a sick, wounded soul and a loveless heart. No! were he ten thousand times more guilty and wicked than his enemies declare, my duty still would be at his side. A fugitive from justice, I would

fly to share his lot, whether 'twere joy or sorrow. Living or dying I am his. One thing more. Should I learn that he was untrue to me, that he loved another, and was loved in return by her, I would still say, God bless them both; God bless HER that she has given him what I have failed to do. I am indebted to her for conferring the pleasure that my sick, wounded soul was not able to bestow; and my duty would still keep me at his side."

The major sighed deeply.

Timea waited a moment to collect herself, and then added, in a more tender tone—

"The stab I received years ago has been propitiated by this sabre stroke. I shall keep the broken weapon as a memento. As often as I look upon it I shall remember that you have a noble soul, and that will help cure me. Now leave me for ever. You always have my best wishes."

Timar tarried no longer for developments. He hurried out of the secret chamber. A dark form stood in his way.

"What have you heard? What have you seen?"

It was Athalie.

Timar pushed the dark form against the wall, and, pressing her back, he hissed into her ear—

"May you be damned for ever! Curses on the house, and on the ashes of him who reared it!"

Like a crazy man he ran down the steps and out of the house.

Timea's door opened, and the major tried to pick his way in the darkness. Timea rang. Mrs. Sophie shouted a reply, and scolded at the top of her voice the unknown miscreant who had turned off the hall lamp.

Athalie withdrew from her hiding place at an opportune moment, gnashing her teeth and talking to herself.

Who knows what threat died between her lips!

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST LOSS.

Fly! But whither? That was now the question. The clocks in the town struck ten. The bars were already placed across the crackling ice bridge which led from the small branch of the Danube over to the island near Komorn. No one now could reach it without alarming the ticket-takers on the bridge or the police who kept watch on both banks of the stream. The Mayor had given strict orders that no one should be allowed to pass from eight o'clock at night until seven o'clock in the morning, not even the Pope of Rome, should he present himself there.

To be sure it was possible that a bank note or two would have more influence with the toll-takers than the authority of the Church; at any rate a report crept about that Herr von Levetinczy had gone out of town in great haste, and in the middle of the night had crossed the dangerous ice bridge.

Now then there was a good chance for the gossips. Everybody could say, "He has gone off to America." And Timea would hear it.

Timea! O how hard it was to get away from the sound of that name. It re-echoed everywhere. There was nothing to be done but to return to the house in the Raizenstrasse and wait for the dawn. That was a fearful night. He crept into his own room like a thief. All the rest of the people in the house were asleep. When he reached his chamber he did not light a lamp. He sank down upon the sofa, and, in the darkness, spirits of evil omen seemed to surround him.

Timea's alabaster face blushed red among them. Then there was life under that ice, only it lacked the sunshine. Her marriage had been eternal winter, the frost of the North Pole to her. And from this unlucky wedlock there was no salvation, for the woman was loyal. His rival too was a true friend, who would break his sword over the head of any man who dared to calumniate the husband of the woman he adored. Timar felt humiliated before this man. He had hated him as his successful rival, he had despised him as a hungry wolf who had devoured the crumbs of the swindling provision contract, and now he saw in him a noble character, far superior to his own. And Timea loves this man, and he is unhappy as well as she. He, Timar, Fortune's favourite, is the sole cause of their misery. They revere him, though they cannot love him. They cannot conceive of such a thing as deceiving him, cheating him, disgracing him, or snatching a diamond from the breastplate of his honour. They guard this as they would a holy relic. And if anyone should say to the pair that he was not worthy of their esteem, with what eagerness Timea would cry out, "Did he not take me, a poor dependant, and make me the mistress of this house?"

Had one said, "It is not true. He was the dependant, and you the mistress of all his property; and with your inheritance he made himself rich and then gave your wealth back to you!" she would have replied, "He has no one but me. Mine is the only face by whose smile his sad countenance can be brightened!"

That is not true. He found life and love in a secret corner of the world, where he deceives you, and has broken faith with you, and done dishonour to your loyalty.

"Shall I then despise him whom all esteem?"

Yes; for why does everyone respect him, except because he is not known by anybody to be what he really is. Yet if he were known, if he were unveiled, would this wife say, "I will bear the shame of this man as I have shared in his good repute!"

She would say this—Timea is of just such a nature as this—she would say, "If you have made me wretched, let us suffer together." This is the pitilessness of an angel!

And if the story of No Man's Land had been told to her—including the whole truth about Naomi—she would have replied, "God bless her who has given to him the happiness which I failed to do!"

Such is Timea. But Naomi? What of her on that desert island, from which she cannot escape? Alone in the silent wintry meadow, with her little child in her arms! Of what is she thinking now? She has no one to speak a word of comfort to her. How she must tremble in her loneliness, from fear of wild beasts, wicked men, and nameless terrors. How heavy must her heart be as she thinks of her distant lover and wonders where he can tarry so long. O, if she but knew! If both these women knew what a sinful wretch is he who has caused them both so much suffering. And if there should be someone who should tell them? That stranger! Who could it have been who had spoken, and over whose head the major had broken his sword? How could one find out who this person was, now that he had gone, wounded after the duel, out of the town?

Timar considered the matter. Would it be well to fly from this man? To fly! That is his eternal temptation. There is no more uncomfortable feeling for him than to stay in any one place. Since he left No Man's Land he can find rest nowhere. Even on his journey, when they stop to feed the horses, he cannot stay quietly in the inn, but has to go forward on foot. Some spirit of unrest pursues him everywhere.

Sometimes he resolves to take Naomi and little Dodi, and go on shipboard and sail round the world—to dwell with them in some unknown hemisphere. But Timea! At this name his plans fall into shipwreck. In the ocean a warm current from the Equator flows to the North Pole, and flows back again bringing icebergs with it to the Equator. Such an ocean current is there in Timar's breast. No sleep visits his eyes. The clock strikes twelve! Seven long hours till morning, and these full of sad and feverish thoughts! At length he resolved to get up and strike a light. There is no such salutary thing for the headache as prosaic work. It is more effectual than opium or digitalis. He who has much to do has little time for sorrow. Merchants seldom commit suicide from disappointments in love. Business cares are a healthy foot-bath which takes the blood away from the nobler parts of the body. Timar began to look over a pile of letters which lay on his table. His head clerk was in the habit of putting such correspondence there as required a personal answer or an important decision. Several

of these letters were postmarked at Baja, then Vienna, Levintinzy, &c., showing that they had followed him to all these places, and in vain; so at last they had been returned to his headquarters at Komorn. If he had not been surrounded by honest people during his six months' absence he could have been easily robbed and cheated. On some of these letters Timea had written a few words to say that she had attended to them. Timea again! Timar read letter after letter, and each contained good news. Like Polycrates he could lose nothing, and at last he began to tremble at his own marvellous fortune.

His wealth increased continually, and his capital grew so large that it had to lie unemployed. Even his benefactions, extensive as they were, did not exhaust his surplus. Everything he undertook succeeded. Whatever he put his hand to turned to gold. The most worthless paper became as good as a bank note, if the name of his firm was endorsed upon it. And what was the foundation of this monstrous prosperity? A secret which was his alone. Who else saw the treasure of Ali Tschorbadschi roll out in the dark cabin? He and the moon, a good accomplice, who will not betray him. Is it then a part of the world's social order that, if only a crime is never found out, then the results of it shall be success, good repute, and virtue? Ah, that cannot be possible! Timar could not believe this, for there was a moral sense underlying his nature which convinced him that his good fortune, however dazzling it seemed, must crumble to ashes, for there is such a thing as justice under the sun. Gladly would he have given half of his fortune—yes, even the whole of it—could he have bought the security that he should not yet be called upon to reckon with inexorable destiny. He felt that his wealth, his position, his great name and splendour, were but a pitiless irony of fate.

To him they seemed heaped upon him so that he could not crawl out from under them to reach the only thing which could make him happy, a life with Naomi and little Dodi. When the first Dodi died he realised what the boy had been to him; he now felt all the more keenly what his second child was to his heart, and yet he could never make him his son openly—Timar was buried under a heap of gold from which there was no escape. An old nervous dream which had tortured him in his illness on the island returned upon him. He thought that, though living, he lay in a grave filled with gold pieces, and

at the head of this grave stood a marble monument which enumerated his good deeds. On this marble stood an alabaster statue, which would not move ; and this was Timea. A beggar with a little child came to pluck a flower from his grave, and that was Naomi. He, lying alive under ground, longed to rise, yet dared not call out, "Naomi, give me your hand, and help me out from under this heap of gold !"

Timar shook off this vision, and continued to read his letters. Among them was one from his agent in Brazil. The business of the Hungarian meal, his pet project, had succeeded beyond all expectation. This contributed not a little to the reputation and the fortune of his firm. Just then he remembered that as he went down the steps of his house the letter-carrier had given him a letter which had a foreign stamp on it. He had put it into his pocket, and other thoughts had banished it from his mind. Now he took it out, and saw that it was written by the same agent who had given him the favourable report of the Brazilian business. It read as follows :—

"DEAR SIR,

"Since my last letter our business has received a severe blow. Your *protégé*, Theodore Kristyan, has shamefully deceived and swindled us. This man had for so many years shown himself so honest, industrious, and trustworthy that we reposed the greatest confidence in him. His dividend from the business was sufficient to enable him to live well upon his income, and lay aside something every year. He *did* leave his capital with us at interest ; but the fellow is the greatest cheat and swindler on earth. While he was putting his capital into our hands, he was stealing from our business, embezzling funds, and forging receipts and bills of exchange upon our firm ; for since he had our power of attorney he could easily do this—and now we find a deficit of at least 10 million reis."

Timar let the letter drop from his hand. Ten millions of reis, a sum equal to 100,000 gulden ! This was the ring of Polycrates which he threw into the sea.

He picked up the letter, and read on—"Still worse than this defalcation is another mischief which he has done us. During the last few years he has mixed poor flour from Louisiana with the Hungarian product, to increase his profits. Through this Yankee trick he has greatly injured the reputation of our



flour, and hurt our business so that I do not know whether we can ever restore it to its old success."

"This is my first blow," thought Timar. And it was a heavy one for the merchant. It struck him in his tenderest point, the very thing he most prided himself on, the thing which had given him his rank as Privy Councillor. This magnificent business, which Timea had built up, was now about to fall into ruin.

Again Timea! He read still further in the letter: "The young criminal was led to his misdeeds by bad women. This is the greatest curse of our city, and the most dangerous for young men. We arrested him, but could recover none of the money he had stolen. He had wasted this on women and at the gambling-table. Perhaps he has hidden a part of it somewhere, hoping to use it if he could get away; but it will be long before it will be of any advantage to him, if he has any left, for to-day he was sentenced to fifteen years in the galleys."

Timar could read no further. He flung the letter on the table, and began to pace up and down the room with restless haste.

Fifteen years in the galleys! Fifteen years chained to the oar, and condemned to watch only sea and sky all that time! Hopeless, comfortless years in which to suffer the heats of the burning summers, to loathe the monotonous sea waves, and to curse pitiless men! He would be an old man when his term of punishment had expired! And why had all this happened? That Michael Timar, Herr von Levetinczy, might not be disturbed in his forbidden pleasures on No Man's Land! That there should be no one who could betray Timea to Naomi, or Naomi to Timea! Did you not think when you sent Theodore to Brazil that some such consequences might ensue? Yes, indeed you did. You counted on the opportunity which should make this man a criminal. You did not send a bullet through his brain, as a decent man might have done in a duel with a person who stood in the way of his love affairs. No; you pretended a fatherly interest in him, and sent him on a journey three thousand miles away. Now for fifteen years to come he will be before your mind. You cannot escape this vision either on land or sea.

Timar's room had no fire in it; it was cold, and frost

sparkled on the window panes. But the perspiration stood in beads on his brow as he paced up and down the chamber.

Every man, then, is unlucky whom his hand touches! His hand is accursed. Once he flattered himself that he had been a blessing to everybody in whom he took an interest, and that in this way he was expiating his sins. And now comes a bitter contradiction of his self-deception. Misery and crime spring from his finger-tips.

Through him the wife whom he revered was wretched, and her sufferings were shared by the friend from whom he had craftily stolen her hand in marriage. And just so unhappy must be that other woman, whose heart he had stolen from her, and for whom there was no place on earth where she could live openly. Through him too this wretched young man must hear the rattle of his chains for fifteen years to come! That was a frightful midnight for him. Would the morning never dawn? It seemed to him that his room was like a prison or a sepulchre. But this terrible letter had still a postscript. It was dated on the following day, and read as follows:—

“I have just received a letter from Port au Prince, which informs me that three galley-slaves escaped from the galley the night before, taking a boat with them. The police are on the look out for them. Our rascal is supposed to be one of them.”

A nameless terror seized upon Timar as he read these words. Sweat had stood on his forehead before, but he now began to shiver and tremble. He looked stealthily around. What was he afraid of? He was alone in his chamber, yet he trembled like a child to whom one has told frightful ghost stories. He could remain there no longer. He took his pistols, and examined them to see if they were loaded; he looked to see if his dagger was in its sheath. He must go from this place. It is still night. The watchman has just cried the hour, one hour after midnight; the morning must not find him here.

He can go to Neu Szöny without crossing the bridge, for the Danube is frozen over above the island. It needs only that a man shall not tremble at the darkness and the cold as he trembles here before the burning candles and this open letter. He held the letter in the candle flame and

burned it up. Then he blew out the light, and slipped out of the chamber.

As he closed the door he began to fear that he had set something on fire when he burned the letter, so he turned back ; but he saw only the glowing and charred paper, which lay curled up like a snake on the floor. He waited until this grew black, and then he went out into the midnight. As he strode through the rooms and garden, that nameless terror accompanied him. He held his left hand above his head, as if to ward off a blow ; in his right he held his dagger. But no one followed him, no one crept up to him. When he reached the street his heart grew lighter. His ordinary courage returned to him.

Fresh snow had fallen. It crackled under his feet as he hurried toward the shore of the Danube, down the Raizenstrasse as far as Mühlen-hafen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ICE.

The Danube was frozen over throughout its whole length, as far up as Pressburg. To reach Neu Szöny from Komorn it was necessary to go clear of the point of the island. Timar carefully studied his course. He knew his way perfectly, as soon as he could catch a sight of the Münsterberg and his own villa. One thing, however, did not enter into his calculations. And this unexpected contingency surprised him. It was a thick fog. Timar had counted on a calm, starry night.

At first it was only a thin veil, but it grew denser and denser, till he could scarcely see three paces in any direction.

If he had listened to one word of his inner monitor, his good common sense, he would have turned back immediately. But he had parted company with his judgment long since, and a dogged determination to reach the other side urged him forward into the mist. He had walked nearly an hour, when he became conscious that he had lost his way. It was a quarter to three by his watch.

He listened. Not a sound greeted his ear. He was far from the village. Not even the bark of a dog could be heard.

He felt that he had been going the length of the river, and so wheeled about at right angles and took a new direction. The Danube is not more than 2,000 paces in width anywhere, and he reasoned that he must touch the bank somewhere soon. Only, in a fog a pedestrian is so easily deceived. To get out of the way of the ice barricades, which here and there had piled themselves up, he had taken a zigzag path, and was really moving in a circle, coming back to the same place every few hundred steps.

Time wore on. He found he had consumed five hours, and that his strength was gradually weakening. He had slept none the night before, nor eaten anything the previous day.

He stood still again and listened. It was near the hour for the Angelus. The bell must soon sound from either the village or the city. It was a strange satire that the call to prayer should be wished for by so great a sinner. A fugitive, flying from the path of rectitude, listening earnestly for the summons to morning devotion.

Soon he heard the bells of the Komorn Cathedral, yet they sounded so far behind him, he changed his course again, after taking careful bearings. But the bells were no sure guide for an offender against the Church. Their chime deceived him, and sent him farther from his hoped-for destination.

He wandered, sometimes stumbling, at other times crawling on all fours; yet with all this effort no nearer either shore.

He did not dare to call out.

He heard no sound but the flapping of the crows with their wings, and these he could not see. He looked eagerly for a faint sunrise. He put his ear to the ice in the hope of learning the direction of the current. Every fresh attempt was fruitless.

At last the fog lifted a little, and he saw what proved to be the sun's disc. Yet how high it was! surely it was nearly noon. And in the distance, by its translucent rays, he saw something else—the roof of a house. It darkened again, but he had fixed the locality of that roof so well there was little

danger now of his being turned about. On approaching it to within ten feet, it proved to be a mill, torn from its foundations, and as cleanly cut as if a carpenter's saw had severed it from its original place.

Timar's head was all in a whirl. Was this the ghost of the mill that they encountered in the whirlpool, near Perigrada Island, when he was still poor and in want? A painful desire prompted him to enter and investigate. The door stood open and the lock was sprung. The grinding machine was intact; it seemed as if the miller's spirit must issue from some corner.

Crows had taken possession of the roof. Occasionally one flew away. His place was soon filled by another. Except for an occasional *caw*, no notice was taken of the human intruder. Timar was tired to death; he seated himself on a beam against the wall, and was asleep in a trice. He stood again on the beak of the St. Barbara, his grappling-hook in his hand, and a pale-visaged girl by his side. "Back into the cabin!" he cried. The girl would not move. The ship gave a lurch, and all were going to the bottom.

Timar, who had fallen to the floor, awoke.

He began to realise his situation. If he fell asleep again, he would be sure to freeze to death.

A comfortable way of going out of life!

But what a sensation when he should be discovered! Baron Michael Timar Von Levetinczy found frozen to death in an abandoned mill! What a mystery! He must make another effort. He left the mill; it was almost as dark as at midnight. Was there no living thing about? He looked down, and on the thin layer of snow he distinguished a line of diminutive footprints. After some deliberation he decided that they were the tracks of mice, imprisoned in the mill when it was torn up. They had evidently found the shore, for there were no return marks. He followed where these led. A wise, an all-powerful man guided by the least of the mammals!

Half an hour later he reached Neu Szöny, and not long after the hotel where he had left his wagon.

Fog continued on every side of him, so no one noticed whence he came. He partook of a plate of pickled pig's feet—the regular meal of the drivers—drank a glass of wine and ordered his horse.

It was late the following evening before he reached his castle on the Platten See.

He learned on his arrival that the fishermen had planned to make their first draught the next morning. Galombosch, the oldest of the craft, was very sanguine that the "haul" would be abundant.

"And what makes you think that?" asked Timar.

"One good symptom is that the lake has frozen over so early, and the fishes, just before spawning, came in great schools into our favourite inlet. But the surest sign of good fortune is that Herr Levetinczy has arrived. Luck and success follow him everywhere;"

"Luck goes with me!" Timar repeated to himself satirically, and sighed.

"Oh, we shall catch the king of the bay to-morrow, I'll be bound!" repeated Galombosch.

Timar let the exclamation pass, and dismissed the fisherman; he wished to go to bed at once.

Now he knew how exhausted he was. He had a peaceful and unbroken rest; no dreams disturbed him, and when he awoke his troubles appeared a year older. It was an eternity since the day before yesterday. Hastily dressing, after his usual cold bath, he found that the weather had changed, and the moon was shining through the frost-work on the window pane. It was not day yet, but the bay glittered in the moonbeams like a silver mirror. It was one solid piece, with not a crack or a break anywhere. Its beauty and brilliancy struck a tender chord in Timar, who looked long and silently in admiration. His meditations were disturbed by the approaching fishermen, equipped with nets and axes, eager to begin their labours before sunrise.

Old Galombosch began the hymn, "Who else in Thy tabernacles, O Lord," and the rest joined lustily, after the opening line.

Timar, out of harmony with this spirit of praise and thanksgiving, moved away; for he could not join the singers, and he was conscious that he had no right amongst those innocent, honest souls.

The chorus resounded two miles or more, and the bank re-echoed the strains.

The moon paled before the brighter light of the rising sun, and the splendour of the sight increased with the incoming

day A more glorious sunrise never smiled on the earth; the rich colouring of gold and scarlet and red mingled with the violet tints of departing night; the reflection on the clear ice, making it seem two majestic suns instead of one, gave a magical effect to the whole surrounding. What wonder that the thankful souls of these simple fisher-folk involuntarily burst into a song of praise?

The head fisherman, Galombosch, called out to Timar—

“You will hear something soon to surprise you; but you must not be frightened.”

“Frightened! what can happen to scare anybody here?”

No time to answer that question.

When the rays of the sun poured their beams directly on the ice, that covered the lake as a glass does a framed picture, there arose a combination of sounds, as if ten thousand stringed instruments had been touched by deft hands, reminding one of the music of Memnon, son of the Dawn; then a snapping and crackling, and in every direction the great mirror of the Platten See, no more a smooth glass, is covered with all conceivable shapes, like an immense mosaic. It makes one's heart beat to hear it and see it, for it surely must be a forerunner of some mighty disturbance.

This extraordinary phenomenon made a marked impression on Timar. The fishermen, used to this manifestation of nature, are not the least disturbed. Some are spreading their nets; yonder, wagons of hay, drawn by oxen, are distinguishable; but to Timar, sensitive and thoughtful as he was, it prompted a play of fancy unlike anything he had hitherto experienced. It was another revelation of life. The wind, the storm, the earth, the moon, the stars, all were part of some superior being—all spoke, if one could only interpret their speech!

Suddenly there was an explosion, like a volley of cannon; the entire surface of ice swayed and trembled. From the Füred bank far up to the peninsula of Tihany, a distance of 3,000 paces, the ice broke apart nearly three feet, and there yawned the opening the whole length.

Timar stood about six feet from this fissure, and quivered in every nerve.

“It is the Rianas, the alarm crack,” cried the sailors, and ran toward Timar, who remained rooted to the spot where he stood.

They explained to Timar that the "alarm crack" was something peculiar to that place, known nowhere else, and that this fissure was the source of great danger to unsuspecting travellers crossing the bay; for this reason it was customary for them to drive stakes, wherever it was possible, and tie great bunches of hay to them. They served as danger signals to all passers over.

"But it is just as dangerous and more thrilling when a great pressure of wind forces the ice-split together again. It sounds like the call to the last judgment," said old Galombosch, particularly anxious to display his knowledge of this wonderful phenomenon.

It was noon, and the fishing began in good earnest. Fortune favoured the men; from the king fisher—the fogasch, a terror to all the lesser tribe in the Platten See—to the delicate carp, nothing escaped their nets. The fogasch was the last victim; in his capture the net was broken, and when he turned over for the final struggle, he gave the fisherman's son a box on the ear with his tail that sent the youth sprawling full length. It was the last stroke of heroism of piscatorial royalty.

"This, my lord," said Galombosch, "we must send to her ladyship, Madame von Levetinczy, and you must not forget to write her that whoever partakes of this delicacy is eating king's food."

Timar thanked him for the timely suggestion, and promised that a liberal "trinkgeld" should be distributed to all hands.

The short winter's day was nearly at an end when the final disposition was made of the king of the bay. Instead of a scattering now amongst the fisher-folk, activity was but just begun. From every direction they came, with baskets, wagons, bottles, and bags. The fishermen gathered in one spot, with their booty, and this chosen locality was the point of attraction for their wives, daughters, and friends.

As soon as the sun had gone down, torches were made of bent reeds; a fire was kindled on the ice, and the fish market was soon in full blast. The higher priced fish were saved to be forwarded to Vienna and Pesth. Carp, perch, and pike were good enough for the palates of the poor. These went for a penny a piece, and even at this rate the

fishermen made a round sum, for they had gathered together not less than 3,000 pounds weight.

"This Timar is surely Fortune's favourite! He carries luck everywhere!"

Exclamations of praise went from mouth to mouth, and the whole party was in the best of spirits.

Timar wanted to provide a festive evening for the gathered multitude. He ordered a large cask of wine to be brought on the ice, and asked Galombosch to prepare an Hungarian fish soup, a dish of which he only knew the secret.

Soon a large vessel was ready. Some of the selected fish intended for a Vienna table were cut up in suitable pieces, red pepper and finely hashed onions added; but the proper proportions for the toothsome soup mingled in the blood of the fish, were left to the master judgment of the old fisherman in whose finger-tips the secret was hidden.

Like mushrooms from a hotbed sprang the gay Gypsy band. A great basket turned upside down furnished the seat for the cymbal player.

The cymbal as used by Gypsies is an instrument made of a steel wire, triangular in shape, on which are passed a series of rings, three or five; these are touched and struck with an iron bar held in the left hand. The music began, and with the sound of the hammer they sang and danced.

Group after group was formed around the bright reed fires, and in gay pairs with exultant shouts they kept step to the favourite St. David's dance. Unexpectedly Timar was coaxed by a bright-eyed brunette to join the merriest party. He caught the sportive humour, and was one of them heart and soul. Human nature is full of contradictions.

The festivities lasted till long after midnight. Then with loaded baskets and wagons they left in pairs, but not till each had made the customary bow to the manager of the evening's amusement, and wished long life and domestic happiness to the generous Baron von Levetinczy.

Timar remained till Galombosch had packed the precious king of the bay in ice and straw, and nailed the board box with his own hand. It was placed upon the wagon that had brought Timar hither, and the driver ordered to go directly to Komorn with the valuable load.

Timar submitted to the strong-willed old fisherman, and wrote the explanatory letter while the packing was going on,

The letter was couched in delicate terms; it was even affectionate in places. He addressed Timea, "My dear wife." He gave a description of the ice carnival, which began with the successful draught of fishes, a specimen accompanying the bearer of the letter. He said nothing of the wonderful, frightful alarm crack, and how close he was to the deadly gap. He mentioned all the interesting events of the evening, and how he had been decoyed into the dance by a trim peasant lass.

Merry letters are often written by persons of suicidal intent.

When the missive was ready he carried it to the driver. Galombosch was standing by the wagon chatting, while waiting for his master.

"You must be tired, Galombosch. Go home now and lie down to rest."

"Well, yes," said the old man, lighting his pipe, "after I have poked up the fires once more, because not only the foxes but the wolves from the neighbouring woods will be attracted by the fish smell, and will find the trough I have made in the inlet under the ice."

"You need not trouble about them," replied Timar. "It is not worth while to start up the fires. I am sure to be wakeful, and a few shots out of my bow window will scatter all the prowlers."

Galombosch appeared to be quieted, and wishing Timar a "God with you!" sauntered homewards.

The deaf vine-dresser, who, besides his imperfect hearing, had taken his share of the wine at the supper, was fast asleep long ago.

He was the only person in the house besides Timar; and Gabriel's trump would scarcely waken the sleeper.

Timar went upstairs to his own room, and fanned the chimney fire. He was not drowsy. His excited soul did not require dull sleep.

He sought another means of recreation.

He opened the bow window and pondered on the slumbering world.

The moon had not yet risen, only the stars glistened, and the reflection of each sparkling orb was visible in the mirror below. The constellations were all there—Saturn, Libra, Arcturus, the Swan, the Virgin with her ear of corn, and Berenice the faithful wife.

Timar gazed in a state of unconsciousness. He sees and feels nothing. Neither the cold nor the throbbing of his heart; neither the outside world nor the world within him. He only gazed, and rested his exhausted powers.

CHAPTER V.

A VISION OF TERROR.

The stars shone in the heavens above, and glittered on the ice below. No breath of wind broke the silence. Suddenly a voice behind Timar startled him.

"Good evening, Sir!"

The voice, the words roused Timar from his dark mood, and he stepped from the narrow corner of the room back into the part of it where the lamp was burning and the fire on the hearth blazing. The lamp and the fire were still bright. In the doorway leading to the staircase, between the fire and lamplight, stood a figure, at sight of which every nerve in Timar's body quivered and trembled.

He did not recognise the person before him, and yet he knew well who it was.

In the chill midnight, through the darkness, over the icy Danube, Timar had fled from this terror-inspiring vision.

It was a man in naval uniform. The wind and snow had dealt harshly with his dress—the gold lace about the collar was torn—the green coat was faded and worn at the elbows, and two buttons were ripped off. The right sleeve showed a rent which had been fastened up with white twine, and the shoes were in no better condition. Both were worn out at the toes, and showed the naked feet within them, and a piece of old carpet was wound about one foot.

The shabby clothes were in keeping with the wearer. He had a sunburnt, copper-coloured face, a neglected beard, and a stubbly moustache. A black silk handkerchief was bound about his head, covering one eye.

It was this person who had accosted Timar with his "Good evening, Sir!"

"And who are you?" returned Timar.

"Ah, ah, dear godfather, don't you know me?" said the stranger, with mocking friendliness.

"Kristyan!" gasped Timar.

"The very man! Your dear little Theodore! Your precious adopted son! I thought you would know me."

"What do you want?"

"What I want first is this double-barrelled gun in my own hands. For I remember telling you when we parted, 'If I ever come before your face again, you may shoot me at once'—and I have changed my mind!"

With these words the intruder snatched Timar's gun from the corner, cocked it, threw himself down in an arm-chair before the fire, and laid the weapon across his knees.

"There! No—we can talk comfortably to each other. I have come a long distance and am cursed tired. My carriage left me in the lurch, and I had to travel part way on foot."

"What do you want here?" interrupted Timar.

"First of all, decent clothes; for these bear the marks of the inclemency of the weather."

Timar went to his wardrobe, took out one of his coats trimmed with Astrachan, and the garments belonging to it, and laying them on a chair between him and his visitor, pointed silently to them.

The vagabond, keeping one hand on the lock of the gun, with the other gathered up the garments, and with artificial grimaces said, as he examined the clothing—

"Good, very good! Only you have forgotten something. This coat usually has something in the breast-pocket. A pocket-book! Now isn't it so?"

Timar, without a word, took his purse from a drawer and flung it at the speaker.

The wretch opened it with one hand and the help of his teeth, and counted the contents, bank notes and gold.

"So far so good!" said he, and stuck the purse into his pocket. "And now may I ask for some clean linen? I have been wearing my shirt for two weeks, and fear it is not presentable in good company."

Timar gave him a shirt and coliar from one of his shelves.

"Good! Now I can proceed with my toilet. But first I must have a little talk with you, so that you may understand what you will see when I undress myself, your grace!

Yet, why the devil should I call you your grace, since we are such old comrades! We should be more familiar than that."

Timar seated himself, still in silence.

"Well, my dear fellow," the vagabond began, shoving the handkerchief back which covered his eye, "you remember that a couple of years ago you sent me to Brazil, don't you? O how soft I was, like a wet sponge! I adopted you as my father, and promised you that I would become an honourable man. But you did not send me there to become a respectable man, but merely to get me out of your way in this hemisphere. You reasoned very wisely that if a man of my bad blood went to Brazil, he would fall a prey to women, and either he would die, or they would make a thief of him; either he would drown in the sea, or be shot by somebody. Anyhow, he would be got out of your way."

Timar buried his face in his hands, unable to look the man in the face, or to contradict him.

His guest continued, "You also entrusted to me large sums of money. And why did you do that? You counted on my stealing some of it, and then you would have me arrested and locked up! It happened just as you expected. Twice I had the fever, and might have died; but I escaped, to your great joy, no doubt! Suddenly I came to the conclusion to carry out your wishes by taking ten million reis out of your cashbox. Ten million reis! These Spaniards reckon in copper halfpennies, so as to make a sum appear large. The ten millions were only a paltry 100,000 gulden! And if you knew how lovely the women are there, you would not blame me. They disdain anything but real jewels—but then how well these become their fair necks! But that's all over. I am at home again, and I must take what comes. If I can't get bananas, I must make potatoes do! Well, to return to my story. Your agent there did not see the affair in the same light that I did. The rascal brought me before the judge, and the judge sentenced me for this youthful indiscretion to fifteen years in the galleys! Now, wasn't that barbarous?"

Timar shuddered.

"They treated me abominably. They took off my good clothes, and that they might not lose me, they branded me with a hot iron on my shoulder." With these words Kristyan stripped off his coat, and pushing his dirty shirt aside,

he showed the red galley mark to Timar with a bitter smile. "See! they branded me for you—as if I had been your colt or your calf, so that you shouldn't lose me. And there was no need of it, for I will never leave nor forsake you, don't be afraid!"

Timar looked at the mark with strange curiosity; he could not turn his eyes away from it.

"Well, after this was done, they led me by the neck to the galleys, and fastened my leg to the bench with a ten-pound iron weight. See, here I carry the marks of it!"

With that, he took off his torn shoe and showed Timar the red streaks on his ankle which the half-open wound had left.

"This, too, is a souvenir I owe to you!" he continued.

Timar looked in shuddering silence at the inflamed ankle.

"And yet, my dear comrade, how good Fate has been to me! How wonderful are the ways of Providence! What unexpected joys come to us in the midst of our sufferings! With me, on the bench to which they had chained me, was an old, stubbly-bearded, vigorous man. He was to be my companion for fifteen years, and naturally I looked pretty closely at him. I addressed him in Spanish, 'Sir, it seems to me as if I had seen your worship somewhere?' 'See, and be damned!' was his reply. Then I spoke to him in Turkish, 'Effendi, didn't you live in Turkey once?' 'What business of yours is that?' he answered. Then I said in Hungarian, 'Were not you formerly called Kristyan?' The old man stared at me, and said, 'Yes.' 'Then I am your son Theodore—your dear little son—your only heir!' Ha, ha, ha! Just imagine this—I found my long-lost parent on the other side of the world, in the galleys. Providence had brought father and son together at last! But I beg of you to give me a little wine and something to eat, for I am hungry and thirsty, and I have a long story to tell you which will amuse you greatly."

Timar did as requested, and set bread, ham, and wine before Kristyan. The guest sat at table with the gun between his legs, and ate like a starved dog ravenously, sipping at intervals the wine like a gourmand, and smacking his lips after each taste. And then he went on with his mouth full—

"When my dear papa and I had recovered from the first joy of reunion, he said to me, 'You gallows-bird, how came you here?' Naturally my respect for my father prevented my

asking him this question in return, so I replied, that I had stolen ten million reis from a Hungarian magnate, by the name of Timar. 'And where did *he* steal so much money?' asked my papa. I replied that this money was not stolen, but that it belonged to a great merchant, who owned lands, ships, and other property. 'That makes no difference,' replied my old man; 'whoever has money has stolen it. If he has much, he has stolen a good deal; if he has little, he has stolen but little. If a man didn't steal it himself, his father or his grandfather stole it for him. There are one hundred and thirty-three kinds of theft, and among them there are only twenty-three kinds for which men are sent to the galleys.' I saw I couldn't bring my respected parent to a better view of this matter, and so I dropped the subject. Then he asked me, 'How the devil did you come to know this rich Timar?' So I told him the story: how I knew this gentleman when he was only a poor ship's clerk; how I was detailed to arrest a Pasha flying from the Turkish police, and how this Pasha embarked on Timar's ship and escaped to Hungary. At that my father burst out laughing. 'What was the name of this Pasha?' said he. 'Ali Tschorbadschi!' said I. With that the old man roared and struck me on the knee, as if he meant to jump overboard, but that, ha, ha, ha! he couldn't do because of the iron chain. 'Did you know him?' asked I. The old man shook his head, and only said, 'Go on. What became of this Tschorbadschi?' Then I told him that I tracked him to this ship, and went ahead by land to Pancsova to meet and arrest him there. But when the vessel got in no Pasha was on board. He had died on the way; and since no one would allow him to be buried on shore, he had been thrown into the Danube—and all this Timar had proved by regular documentary evidence.

"The old fellow said, 'This Timar was then a poor man!'
'Yes, as poor as I,' I replied. 'And now, you tell me he has millions?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'since I have been so fortunate as to relieve him of ten million of reis.' 'Then,' said my dear papa, 'you fool you, don't you see that I told you the truth, and that he stole his money. He stole it from Ali Tschorbadschi. He killed the Pasha on the way, and took his treasures.' I opened my eyes and mouth wide at this, and turned as pale as you are now, my dear comrade. 'I never should have thought of that,' said I. 'Now listen

to me,' continued my beloved parent, and it seems to me I see his fox-eyes as he looked into mine then—'I will tell you a story. I know this Ali Tschorbadschi only too well. He was a thief of course, like every man who has money. He was thief No. 122 or 123. That is the number of Treasurers and Heads of Departments. He kept the money entrusted to him by another thief—thief No. 133; that was the Sultan. Thief No. 132, that is the Grand Vizier, wanted to twist Ali Tschorbadschi's neck in order to steal from him what he had stolen here and there from others. I belonged to the secret Turkish Police at that time. I was only a common thief, No. 10, a bankrupt merchant. Then came a good idea into my head! If I could only advance myself in the ranks, and get to be a thief No. 50. I went to the Pasha, and told him that he was one of a list of rich men whom the Prime Minister was in a conspiracy to have arrested, that he might possess himself of their treasure. Now, what will you give me, said I, if I save your life and your money? Ali Tschorbadschi replied, that he would give me a quarter of his treasure as soon as we were in a safe place. 'Yes,' said I; 'but I want to know how much you mean by that. I don't make bargains blindfold. I am the father of a family, and I must provide for my only son.' The old fellow said this so seriously, that it makes me laugh now to think of it. 'Ah, you have a son!' said the Pasha to my father. 'Very well; if we escape I will give him my daughter in marriage, and then we will keep the money in the family. Send your son to me, so that I may get acquainted with him.' The devil! If I had only known that the lovely, pale-faced woman was intended for me! Do you hear, comrade? I must take another drink so as to forget my disappointment. Permit me to drink to your worship, and to the charming lady who is now your wife!"

The vagabond drank with a swagger, and then sinking back in his chair he began to whistle, like one who had eaten and drunk his fill.

Then he continued—"My father agreed to this proposition of the Pasha. He said, 'We arranged' to put Ali's chief treasures into a leathern sack. I agreed to take it with me on board an English ship, and go to Malta, where I was to wait for Tschorbadschi, who meantime, without luggage but with his daughter, should leave Stamboul on pretence of taking a pleasure trip, but really on the way he should go on board

a ship and join me at Malta. The Pasha showed me the greatest proof of confidence. He took me into his treasure chamber, and let me select what I thought best to put into the sack. I remember well the jewels that passed through my fingers—the pearls, cameos, rings, and bracelets, and a case full of unset diamonds. ‘Could you not steal one of them?’ asked I. ‘You calf!’ said he, ‘why should I steal one diamond, and be thief No. 18! No; I intended to steal all of them!’ ‘You were a clever rascal!’ cried I. ‘The devil I was! No; I was a fool. Why didn’t I take one of the gems I most fancied, the portrait of the Pasha’s wife set in a double row of diamonds!’”

Timar’s face betrayed the deepest anguish at these words. His most important secret then was in the hands of this man; and no mercy was to be hoped for, from him.

Theodore went on—

“My father continued: ‘I took the leathern pouch, and carried it to the Pasha, without rousing any suspicion. The Turk added some rolls of louis d’ors and put into the bag, then fastened it with an English lock and sealed the four corners of the bag with four seals, and sent me for some conveyance to take me and the pouch off unseen by anyone. I was back in a quarter of an hour. He gave me the sack, locked and sealed, and I slipped it under my cloak and hurried off through the garden to my sedan chair. On the way I felt of the bag, and could recognise the bracelets, necklaces of pearl, and the rolls of gold and case of diamonds. An hour later I was on an English vessel, and we weighed anchor and sailed out of the Golden Horn.’

“Here I interrupted my father, ‘And you did not take me with you to Malta?’ I said; ‘and I was to marry the Pasha’s beautiful daughter!’ ‘Pooh, you fool,’ replied my honoured parent; ‘I didn’t need you, any more than I needed the Pasha or his daughter. I had no idea of stopping at Malta; but with the Pasha’s money I was going to sail straight for America. But just imagine the cursed luck. When I had got into a safe place, where no one, not even the devil himself, could see me, I cut the side of the pouch open, and what do you suppose rolled out of it? Copper buttons, rusty horse-shoes;—instead of the jewel case full of diamonds an inkstand, and cheap copper coins instead of the rolls of gold pieces. The rascally thief had cheated me. Such a villain I had never

heard of in the whole catalogue from No. 1 to 133. There was no number for him.'

"The old man was so furious that he almost cried, as he told me this. Then he continued—

"'To be so taken in by a Turk! The thief had taken advantage of my going for the Sedan chair to change the true bag for a counterfeit one, and then sent me off to sea. He meantime had escaped with his treasure in another direction, and got the secret of the conspiracy gratis from me. But there is justice in the world after all! For this great thief met a greater one, who killed and robbed him on the way.' And this extraordinary man, who outwitted the thief who meant to steal, and the thief who had stolen all this treasure—this most thievish thief—was yourself: you, Favourite of Fortune! you, Herr Michael Timar von Levettinczy, my dear comrade!" and the vagabond rose, and bowed mockingly.

Timar answered not one word.

"And now," pursued Kristyan, "let us speak of another matter; but always at three paces distance, and remember that the barrel of this gun is ready for you!"

Timar looked calmly at the weapon. He had loaded it with ball himself.

Kristyan continued, "This discovery had taken from me all taste for the galleys. I could not help thinking, 'What right has the great thief to send the little thief to serve as the galley slave?' Said I to myself, 'If my father had stolen that treasure instead of Michael Timar, I should now have been a gentleman, a nabob; and nobody would have enquired how my father got his money, anymore than they enquire where the ancestors of the present counts and barons, the old robber-knights, got theirs. Instead of that, here I must rot on the ocean. And why? Because Michael Timar not only has snatched that treasure, which ought to have been mine, almost from under my nose, but has also robbed me of that little, blonde, wild creature that was growing up on a desert island, the girl I was to marry. Timar must get me out of the way because he needed a sweetheart; for he could not be happy with his wife whose father he had murdered, and so he must have another woman to love. But so that he need not injure his mercantile credit, and that the world should continue to regard him as the pattern of all

the virtues, he did not choose a ballet girl or a circus beauty, but sought out a poor maiden who knew nothing of the world, who would never come into it, and of whom it would never be known that she shared Herr Timar's pleasures. Fie, Herr Timar! Must you send me to the galleys for fifteen years on this account?"

Blow after blow fell upon Timar's dishonoured head.

Certainly the central points of this accusation were not true. He had not murdered Timea's father, he had not stolen the treasure, he had not seduced Naomi, and he had not condemned Theodore to the galleys; and yet the whole indictment, taken together, had a terrible amount of truth in it. He had played the hypocrite; and now, through this, he was entangled in all manner of sins.

The vagabond continued, "When we were in the Bay of Barra do Rio Grande, the yellow fever broke out among us. My father took it; he sickened near me on the bench. They did not remove him. It was not necessary. A galley slave must die where he is chained. But my situation was extremely unpleasant. The old man shook all day long with the fever, and cursed while his teeth chattered. He was unbearable with his oaths; and he cursed in Hungarian. Why couldn't he curse in Spanish? It is a prettier language, and the other men would have had the benefit of his oaths as well as I. He cursed the Madonna, too. Now there are masculine saints enough to abuse; why need he take a woman? His behaviour was not that of a gentleman. I was disgusted with the old fellow. I was resolved to cut loose from him, not merely because it was unpleasant to see him shivering with a fever which I might take, and which is not altogether a pleasant way of dying, but because his blasphemy offended my taste. Although so strong a bond united father and son, I was determined to break it. I planned how to do it, with three other fellows. But we had to wait till the old man died, for he threatened, if I left him sooner he would betray me to the watchman. We filed off our chains one night. The guard, who noticed our attempt to escape, we flung overboard before he could give the alarm, took a boat and put to sea. The waves were rough, and our boat upset near the land. One of my comrades could not swim, so he was drowned. Another could swim, but not so fast as a shark that swam after him, so he was devoured. I heard his death-

shriek, as the monster crunched him. I alone reached the shore. So you can see I had something yet to do in the world. You as a good Calvinist, and I as a good Mohammedan, both believe in predestination. I had no other desire but to return to Europe. I wanted to see you again. You are my only father now. The sharks have swallowed the other by this time, and perhaps he is as safe there as anywhere; for the devil himself couldn't get at him in that fish's belly. Ho. I got this uniform and money enough for my journey, I'll tell you some other time. At present let us talk about our business, for I presume you are well aware that we have an account to settle between us."

Kristyan put his hand up to the bandage over his left eye. The half-closed wound was an ugly reminder. In cold weather it is not pleasant to be much out of doors with such a wound.

He went on—"I came directly to Komorn to hunt you up. Your agent said you were abroad; but where you were nobody knew. I resolved to wait till you returned; and, to make the time pass more agreeably, I made the acquaintance of some officers, which, thanks to my uniform, was easily done. Then I went to the theatre. There I saw that lovely woman, with the alabaster white face and that melancholy expression; you can guess who she was. Another beautiful woman was always with her. Ha! what killing eyes she has! She is a regular pirate in petticoats. How I should like to belong to a band of robbers if she were the captain of it; and I shouldn't regret it if I had to pay for it with five years of the galleys. But never mind that.

"To proceed with our business. I 'sounded the ground.' I arranged it so that I sat beside this evil angel one evening in the reserved seats. I flirted with her, and she took it kindly. I begged permission to visit her. She said that must depend on the lady, her mistress. I spoke with great admiration of this Madonna-like woman, and said that I had had the pleasure of knowing her family in Turkey, and that her likeness to her mother was striking!"

"What!" said the beautiful girl, "did you know my lady's mother? She died very young."

"I merely saw her portrait," said I. "It was shown me by her father, who was my benefactor. It was a pale, melancholy face, and set in a double row of diamonds, worth hundreds of thousands."

"Ah! then you have seen that beautiful jewel," said the girl. "My mistress showed it to me also, when Herr von Levetinczy gave it to her."

Timar, in blind rage, doubled his fists.

"Aha! I was on the right track," continued Kristyan, looking at the tortured man with a merciless smile. "You had given to the daughter of Ali Tschorbadschi the ornament you had stolen from her father. Then you had, no doubt, all the rest; for all the treasure was together. You cannot deny it. And now we are in the same boat, and whether I address you familiarly, or call you 'Your Worship,' it's all one. We need not trouble ourselves about such trifles."

Timar sat as if paralysed before this man, who held his destiny in his hands. It was not necessary to keep the gun pointed at him. He had hardly strength to sit on his chair.

"But you kept me waiting a long time, my friend, and I began to be uneasy about you. My money began to get low, and none of my rich relations sent me any new supply. Everywhere I heard your praises. A capital business man, a wonderfully clever man, a benefactor of the poor; such were your titles. And then, too, what a pure domestic life you led. You were a pattern to all husbands, and if you died, your body ought to be burned, and the ashes distributed among wives to give as doses of medicine to their husbands. Ha, ha, ha!"

Timar turned from his devilish tormentor.

"O, you are getting tired of this story! Well, let us proceed to business. One day I was rather out of humour, because of your long absence, and as I was in the officers' coffee house, I made bold to say, when your name was mentioned, that I doubted whether so many virtues could dwell in one man's body. Whereupon one of the officers gave me a box on the ear. I had not reckoned on this, and I was as sorry as a dog that I had let a word of criticism on you escape me, and I resolved to heed the lesson I had received. But it would have been well if I had only had my ears boxed. I am used to such trifles. But the fellow made me fight a duel with him, to vindicate your good name. As I learned, this cursed officer was the worshipper of your white-faced Madonna, and yet he was fighting to clear her husband's reputation! That was a piece of your rare good luck, you Favourite of Fortune. But I got a sword cut

over my skull down to my eyebrow. Would you like to see it?"

Kristyan took off the black silk handkerchief, and displayed a long wound held together by plasters. The edges of the cut were still red, showing that it was unhealed.

Timar looked at it with a shudder.

Theodore continued, with bitter irony—

"This is souvenir number three, which I have in my body in consequence of your friendship. That is very good. So much the more is there to my credit in our accounts. I could not stay in Komorn any longer. The affair made talk, and I was in no condition for investigations; although a rascal can go through the whole kingdom, unsuspected and unmolested by the officers of justice, as, for example, you and I do!"

The vagabond seemed pleased with this hit.

"Anyhow, I was glad to leave Komorn, for I was tired of waiting for you. Halt! said I to myself, I know where he is! I know the foreign parts where he is directing the affairs of state! It is not in any known quarter of the world. It is on No Man's Land. I followed you there."

Timar, in great excitement, cried out at these words—

"You have been to the island!"

He trembled from rage and terror.

"Don't be disturbed, my friend," returned Kristyan; "this gun is loaded, and if you stir it will go off, and that will not be my fault. But be easy. It was my loss and not yours that I went there. I always am left in the lurch. 'You dance and I pay the fiddler.' That is as true as the ten commandments. You lie in my bed, and I am turned out of doors. I went to No Man's Land, hoping to find you there; but you had gone, and I saw nobody but Naomi and a little urchin. Hi, hi! friend Michael, who is responsible for that little chap? They call him Dodi. He is a bright little youngster; but how afraid he was of me, just because one of my eyes was bound up! Naomi was afraid of me too, to tell the truth. The two were alone on the island. How sorry I was to learn that Mamma Theresa was dead! If she had been alive she would have received me differently; she was a blessed, good creature. Naomi said I should not enter her house, for she and Dodi were all alone on the island. It was just on that account I came, I said, for she needed a man to protect her. By the way, what have you given her to make her grow so handsome?"

She is lovely enough to stir any man's blood. I told her so, and she frowned at me in return. I only wanted to joke with her, and I asked her if she gave her bridegroom such stony looks as those she bestowed on me. She called me a vagabond, and ordered me to quit the place. I told her I would go and take her with me, and I flung my arm around her waist."

Timar's eyes flashed fire.

"Be quiet, comrade. That was all to your advantage, not to mine; for the girl gave me such a blow that it was nearly twice as hard as the major's, only, to be historically correct, I must say it was on the opposite side from his cut, so that preserved the symmetry of my swollen cheeks."

Timar could not conceal his satisfaction.

"Thanks to you, this is what I got from Naomi. But I grew angry. I am not rough with women generally, but she had roused my temper. 'I'll show you,' said I, 'that you will go with me of your own accord, if you won't let me stay here. You will follow this young gentleman;' and I took Dodi by the hand to lead him along."

"Damned villain!" cried Timar.

"Now, now, now, my friend; we can't both talk at once! It will soon be your turn, and you may say whatever you please. But hear me to the end first. I had been mistaken in thinking we were all alone on the island. That cursed beast, Almirus, was there too. The dog was under the bed all the time, and pretended not to notice me; but as soon as the child began to cry, out rushed the brute and sprang on me, but I pulled out my pistol and fired at the dog."

"Murderer!" cried Timar.

"Pooh! comrade; a dog's blood isn't much on a man's conscience! But the brute wasn't to be silenced by one bullet. In greater fury the dog sprang on me, knocked me down, and bit my left arm. I could not even stir. In vain I tried to get at my other pistol. Almirus held me like a tiger. Then I begged Naomi to set me free. She tried to get the animal away, but she could not. She told me to ask Dodi to call off the dog, for Almirus always obeyed him. I did so, and the good-hearted child took pity on me, and came and flung his arms about Almirus, who then let me go, and Dodi kissed the brute."

Tears sprang to Timar's eyes.

"I came to grief there, you see," continued Kristyan; and he rolled up his dirty and blood-stained shirt sleeve, and showed his left arm. "See, here are the marks of the dog's teeth! Souvenir number four, which I owe to you! My body is a living album of wounds, all due to you! The galley brand, the iron ring, the sabre cut, and the dog's teeth! Now tell me what shall I do to recompense you for all these favours?"

As the vagabond said this, he stripped off all his garments, and Timar could not help seeing all the wounds on his body. Timar seemed to see the rascal's naked soul as well; stained with like scars, for which he too was responsible. Kristyan now understood that it had been no kindness when he was sent to Brazil; that Timar had counted on his vices to get rid of him altogether. This man knew, too, how Timar had got his wealth, and he envied him. This man knew how Timar was deceiving both Naomi and Timea, and was furiously jealous of him. Every evil passion seethed in his soul, and yet Timar was absolutely in his power. He felt utterly helpless before the rascal. Like a man in a dream he struggled vainly to escape. The wounds of this hideous creature acted like a devilish enchantment upon him, and robbed him of all power even to move.

Kristyan saw this, and now did not try to pursue his policy of caution. He put the gun in the chimney corner, and talked carelessly to Timar.

"Now I will make my toilet; and while I am dressing, you can be thinking what answer to give me to the question I have put to you."

He flung his old garments into the fire, where they blazed up like a torch; and then he dressed himself in the clothes Timar had given him. He saw Timar's watch on the mantel, and put that in his own pocket; and he also took Timar's sleeve buttons and fastened his cuffs with them. He took time to arrange his moustache before the mirror, and when he was dressed he nodded his head with an air of profound satisfaction. He stood with his back to the fire, and crossed his arms over his breast.

"Now, my comrade, my dear friend!"

"What do you want?" asked Timar.

"O, you can speak at last! It would not be unjust were I to ask of you 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' would it? Let me brand you on the shoulder with a hot

iron, put you into the galleys, hunt you over the world like a beast of prey, get your wife's adorer to hack you over the forehead, and your sweetheart's dog to bite you and tear your flesh. This would be only fair. But I am not so merciless. I won't talk any more about my wounds. Let us settle our accounts."

"Do you want money?" asked Timar.

"Yes, of course; but we will talk about that later. First let us speak of our common interest. I need to absent myself for a while from the world, not because of the money I stole from you, but because of my escape from the galleys, and the keeper whom I flung into the water. Your gold will do me no good till I get rid of this galley brand and the marks of the iron ring on my ankle. I can remove the first with chemicals, and time will cure the other. I am not afraid that you will put my pursuers on my track. You have too much brain for that. You would take care of me, hide me if anyone was hunting for me; you would cherish me like your nearest friend. I know you. Only in spite of all your affection, something might happen to me; somebody might hit me on the head in the street, or a robber shoot me from behind, or a kindly meant glass of wine might send me on the way that Ali Tschorbadshi went. So, my dear friend, I must take care to drink only out of the same bottle with you. I must look out for myself."

"What do you want?"

"Ask me rather what *you* want? Your worship wants me first to keep all the secrets which I have discovered. Isn't that so? You would be ready to pay me 100,000 francs a year for that service, wouldn't you?"

Timar replied at once—

"Yes, certainly."

The vagabond laughed.

"Oh, I don't ask such a sacrifice of your worship! I told you that just at present I did not need money. I need rest and a hidingplace, and a comfortable and quiet life now. That is not a very exacting demand, is it?"

"Come to the point, and tell me what you demand."

"I will do so. I see that your worship is growing impatient; perhaps you would like to go to sleep!" and with these words he took the gun in his hands, and aimed it at Timar, as if about to fire.

"No; I do not want an income of 100,000 francs a year, my dear friend. I want No Man's Land!"

Timar started to his feet. These words restored his full self-possession.

"What do you want of that?"

"First, a refuge, whither no bloodhound of a spy can pursue me. Next, I desire that your worship should permit me to stay there as long as I please, and that you will furnish me all I need to make me comfortable."

Timar could not restrain his anger at this shameless demand.

"Do not talk like that to me," he replied. "Ask what sum of money you please, and go where you please, except to that island. That is an absurd request."

"By no means, your grace. The air on the island is most wholesome, and I need it to restore my ruined health. Then I remember dear Mamma Theresa said there were healing herbs there, and these will cure my wounds. I do not sigh for the life of a Sybarite; I desire only rest now, and the quiet and rural enjoyments of the golden age. So, your worship, your excellency, give me No Man's Land."

The vagabond spoke in most humble tones, but kept the gun steadily aimed at Timar.

"You are a fool!" cried Timar, turning his back angrily on Kristyan.

"Oh, your grace, your worship, don't turn your back on me! Eccellenza, Senor, Your Highness, Effendi! By whatever title and in whatever tongue you prefer to be addressed, listen to the petition of a poor fugitive!"

This brutal irony was not to the advantage of the speaker. It broke the spell which terror had woven about Timar. He began to wake from his stupor. He remembered that he had to deal with a criminal who was himself in great danger.

"Stop!" said he. "I will not chaffer with you longer. Ask whatever amount of money you please, and I will give it to you. If you want an island, go buy one in the Grecian Archipelago, or anywhere else. If you are afraid of pursuit, go to Rome, or Naples, represent yourself as a Marquis, get into good relations with the Papal party, and you will be safe. Money you shall have, but not the island."

"Ah, your grace begins to put on airs with me! After the

first plunge you are getting used to the cold water, and mean to swim out. Wait; I must give you another ducking. You are thinking, 'Let the fellow go. Let him tell his story to everybody. All he will get for it will be arrest and punishment. He will be made so dumb that nobody will ever hear from him again. Who knows but he will be shot from behind, or his body fished out of the Danube, where probably he will have jumped in himself. Even at the worst, who will believe his story, when I, the rich and respected man, deny it. I have money enough to arrange all these things, and judges and juries will decide in my favour, if the rascal tries to prove his charges.' This is what you are thinking. But learn now with what sort of a man you have to do. You are bound hand and foot, and are as powerless in my hands as a miser in the hands of a band of robbers, who will stick thorns under his finger-nails, and put him to other tortures, till he gives up his treasure to them. I am going to do the same with you. Bear it as long as you choose, and cry out when you have had enough."

Timar listened like a man on the rack to hear what would come next.

"I have told nobody yet what I know about you. I declare that on my honour. Except that little gabble which passed my lips at Komorn I have been silent. But I have written down the facts, and have them in my pocket in four different letters, addressed to four different places. One of these is directed to the Turkish Government, and denounces you as having the confiscated property of Ali Tschorbadshi in your possession; and the Vizier will attend to that. I have catalogued the jewels also, and told when and where you got them into your hands. In the second letter, I denounce you to the Government at Vienna as the murderer of Ali Tschorbadshi, and the purloiner of his wealth. Do not forget that a man who grows suddenly rich has plenty of enemies. My third letter is to Frau von Levetinczy in Komorn. In it I tell her what you did to her father, and how you came to have the portrait of her mother, and the other jewels which you presented to her. I also tell her where she may find you when you are not at home, and I reveal to her the secret paradise on the island, and your love-affair with another woman. I introduce her to Naomi

and Dodi. Now, shall I stick another thorn under your finger-nails?"

Timar's breast heaved violently.

"Ah well, if you have nothing to say I will go on," continued Kristyan. "The fourth letter is addressed to Naomi. In this I tell her all I know about you, and that you have a wife, and are a distinguished man in the world. That you have deceived and dishonoured her. That you have never loved her, but only used her as a plaything; that you are a consummate rascal! Do you not yet cry for mercy? then take this. I am no such fool as to carry these letters about with me, and be at the mercy of some scoundrel whom you might hire to knock me down and rob me of them. If you say we will not chaffer any more, I will reply, 'Your most obedient servant,' and I will leave you, and I shall go straight over to where you see those high towers—to the Convent of Tihany. There I will give my letters to the Prior, and tell him if I do not return in a week's time he must send them to their respective addresses. Then, even if you kill me, the letters will be sent all the same.

"You cannot stay in this country after that. Your wife will never forgive you her father's murder, nor will Naomi forgive you for your betrayal of her trust. The courts will investigate your affairs, and you will have to show how you came by your fortune. The Turkish and Austrian Governments will arrest you. The whole world will know you for what you are, and you will be as much despised as you are now respected. No Man's Land will be no refuge for you, since Naomi will shut her doors against you. She is a proud woman, and in such natures love easily turns to hatred. No, no; there will be nothing left for you, but to fly from the world, as I have to; to disguise your name, as I have to; to run from one city to another, as I have to; to tremble at every step, as I have to! Now then, my man, shall I go or stay?"

"Stay!" gasped the tortured man.

"Aha! So you give in at last. Then we will return to business. First of all, will you give me No Man's Land?"

Timar tried to make a weak resistance. "The island is not mine, but Naomi's," he said.

"A most telling remark! But it does not affect the point: The island belongs to Naomi; but Naomi belongs to you!"

"What will you have?" cried Timar.

"Now, don't roll your eyes like that! I'll tell you what I want in good order. You will write a letter to Naomi, which I will carry to her. In the meantime the cursed dog must be killed, so that I can move about in peace on the island. You can bid her good-bye in your letter, and tell her that other family ties prevent your returning to her; that you have a wife, the lovely Timea, whom she will no doubt remember. Tell her too, that you have provided for her happiness; that you have sent to the ends of the earth for her betrothed; and that he is a fine, strong fellow, who is ready to take your place, and close his eyes to her past. You will furnish us then with plenty of money, give us your blessing, and we will live happily, Naomi and I."

"What! you want Naomi too?"

"Certainly I do. What the devil! did you think I wanted to live like Robinson Crusoe on the island? I need some one to sweeten life for me in that solitude. At first I was taken with your wife's black eyes and pale face, but when I saw Naomi's blue eyes and golden locks, I fell dead in love with her. She has boxed my ears, and insulted me, to be sure. But what better revenge could I have than to return a kiss for a blow. I want the obstinate little witch. That is my present caprice. And what right have you to object? Am I not her betrothed? And I can marry her, and make an honest woman of her—while you can only make her wretched."

The words of this man poured gall and bitterness into Timar's heart.

"Take all that I have!" he implored. "Only not this—not this!"

"Wait awhile. I may accept your kind offer later. But now I want only Naomi. I ask for my *own* property there—not yours."

Timar wrung his hands in anguish.

"Now, my friend, will you write to Naomi, or shall I take the four letters to the convent?"

Timar groaned aloud.

"Poor little Dodi!"

The vagabond smiled mockingly.

"Oh, I will be a father to him, and a good one, never fear!"

At this moment Michael sprang like a tiger on the rascal, and before he could use the gun Timar seized him in both arms, and hurled him through the open door, down on to the landing below, where he struck, and then, under the impetus of the mighty throw, turned a somersault down the staircase, cursing as he went rolling, till he fell to the ground.

All was darkness and silence below. It was midnight. The only man who was in the castle, besides these two, was deaf, and was sunk in a drunken sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT IS THE MOON SAYING?

Timar could have made short work of the miscreant. The craven lay completely in his power; while, as for himself, he felt the strength of a madman in the muscles of his arm. But Timar was unwilling to take any man's life, even in self-defence. He was naturally magnanimous. With everything at stake—wealth and honour, all to be scattered like chaff to the four winds—he chose to allow the man, who surely would work his ruin, to escape. He could have throttled his enemy and saved himself. He did not wish to be saved. He was not a criminal in intention. Circumstances had entangled him, little by little, beyond extrication. The time of settlement had come, and he proposed to face the result.

The moon was just rising above the bank of the Platten See, and Timar sat in the bow window watching Kristyan's retreating steps. He followed him with his eyes over the snow-covered path, till the mirror-like ice of the bay was reached. Kristyan looked like a black speck on a silver platter. He grew smaller and smaller till he was entirely out of sight. He had taken the direction of the double tower on the Peninsula of Tihany.

Timar was so intent on the disappearance of that black speck that he scarcely perceived the storm that arose suddenly over the Lala Mountains. The fishermen had hardly time to hurry back to the Lala shore. Boats lying at anchor were

driven by the storm out toward the middle of the bay. But these storms are so common, and so short in duration, there is no real cause for alarm. The wind is dancing a turn-about, and all will be calm again presently. The cloud that darkened the sky was not large, it just covered the surface of the bay; and as the wind swept across the glassy ice, it sounded like the pitiful wail of lost souls, who remembered their wasted lives and their lost opportunities.

It seemed to Timar that he heard a cry above the roar of the wind—a cry of great distress, which could only come from human lips—a cry of despair that awakens sleepers at midnight, and makes stars tremble. A few moments later, another piercing shriek, and then the mad music of the wind again. Soon the snow-cloud disappeared, the tree-tops in the valley of Arath swayed less and less, the sky was clear, and all was still—as if no storm had been.

In Timar's heart, too, all was still. Here was the end. He could go neither forward nor backward. He stood on the brink of a precipice—his retreat cut off. He reviewed his whole life; every incident appeared before him, as in a panorama. The past was a dream; he would be fully awake hereafter. His early ambition to possess the rich daughter of Tschorbadschi had been the foundation of all his misfortune. He had attempted to solve the riddle of the sphinx with a personal application; and, like the men of old, he became a sacrifice.

How could he live unmasked before the world, unmasked before Timea, unmasked before Naomi? Pushed from the dizzy height, which he had occupied for years surrounded by an admiring world, with the approbation of royalty ever smiling upon him, what could he do exposed before them all? His nature was sensitive; he could not bear the thought, much less the realisation.

With everything in his power, he was helpless. He could wander a stranger the world around, but that was worse than death.

Ah, he had one alternative! The cold moon was luring him. How many times the moon had played an important part in his actions!

And what was it Naomi said once? The cold moon, so cold that it possessed nothing but ice, and mountains, and valleys. She said that she was sure that all poor creatures,

who found nothing in life but sorrow, who cared for nothing on earth, and sought relief in death by their own hand, would go to the moon, where nothing is, where no hope of anything can be. He would go there; and mayhap if Kristyan visited No Man's Land, and took from the poor young mother all hope of seeing Timar again—took from her all faith in mankind—she would follow him there, and he would yet have Naomi.

And with this illogical reasoning he turned again into the room that had so recently been the scene of his adventure with Kristyan.

The fireplace still contained the burning remnants of the clothes which had been thrown in some hours before. He put on fresh logs to hide all trace of what had been there, stirred up the fire, took his mantle, and went out of the house.

He too walked directly towards the Platten See. The half-moon was guiding him on his way—a sun of ice shining on a field of ice.

“I am coming! I am coming!” said Timar involuntarily; “I shall soon know what you have said to me so many, many times.”

He knew just where the fissure in the ice was, and he made for it. The goodhearted fishermen had placed danger signals where the air holes were, and where the great cleft could be avoided by the careful pedestrian. This was the spot that Timar sought.

When he reached a bundle of straw that marked the perilous road, he stood still, took off his hat, and looked to ward heaven. Years had passed since a prayer had been breathed by him. In that hour, the majesty and power of that Being who guided the stars and counted the sparrows overwhelmed him; he remembered then that only one of earth's creatures defied its Maker—man.

He bowed his knee, and prayed earnestly.

“Almighty Power, I have tried to escape Thee, and yet I come to Thee in this hour. I have no complaint. Thou didst lead me, but I would seek a path of my own. Thou didst call, but I preferred a voice that seemed sweeter. And now I am here. In blind submission I walk into futurity. My soul must suffer there. I render expiation willingly, because so many, through my misdoing, have been made unhappy. I have obtained the love to which I had no right—I have appropriated to myself what was not my own. Take these faithful

ones under Thy protection and everlasting grace. I only have sinned, and I only should suffer. Let the curse of heaven fall where it justly belongs. Thou everlasting righteousness, that measures out to me my punishment, mete out to them also their reward. Protect and comfort the weak and innocent ; shield my child. - I bear my fate as I deserve it."

He continued kneeling. Between the split edges of the ice the cold waves could be seen rolling hither and yon. Timar bent his body toward the waves to kiss them, as a man kisses his venerable mother when he is starting on a long journey.

Just as he was about to touch the water with his lips, there arose toward him the head of a human being !

A human head, with eyes fixed and staring, the mouth open, through which the cold waves had a free passage. The phantom disappeared again under water. A moment later, the wave dashed up, and a second time the horrible sight stared Timar in the face. The third time it went out of view for ever ; only a hand appeared, as if to grasp spasmodically—What ?

Timar sprang, half crazed, from his kneeling position ; it seemed as if someone were calling after him. In the broad rift of the ice the water moaned in its undulations, like a living, suffering being. And again in the distance resounded the coming wind, nearer and yet nearer. The moans grew louder and deeper, as the breach in the Platten See narrowed. One universal peal, the rift was entirely closed, locked again. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Timar fell trembling on his face ; and the ice, which rocked like a cradle, lulled him into calm.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO COMES ?

The frost had made a silver forest on No Man's Land. It had covered all the branches of the trees with snow blossoms. Then the sunshine had transformed them to ice, and every twig shone and glittered as if it were glass. The willow trees bent down under the weight of this icy adornment, and the

wind stirred the crystal branches till each twig resounded like a bell, and reminded one of fairy chimes.

There was only a single path across the icy meadow to the little cabin, and this led past Theresa's last resting-place. Naomi went there daily, leading little Dodi by the hand. The two now went there alone. The third, who was wont to accompany them—Almirus—was dying in the cottage. Kristyan's ball had hit the dog in a vital part, and the faithful creature was slowly approaching the end.

It was night. Naomi lighted the torches, took her distaff, and began to spin.

Little Dodi sat beside her, and made windmills of straw. Almirus lay in the corner, and groaned like a human being in pain.

"Mother," said Dodi, "hold your head down. I want to whisper something to you, so that Almirus will not hear."

"But, Dodi, the dog could not understand what you said."

"Oh, Almirus can understand everything. Do you think our dog is going to die?"

"I am afraid so, my darling."

"But if Almirus dies, who will protect us?"

"God."

"Is God strong?"

"Yes, stronger than everybody."

"Stronger than my father?"

"Yes; He gave your father his strength."

"And did He give strength to that bad man with the bandaged eye too? Why should God make him strong? I am afraid that man will come back. He said he would take me off with him!"

"Don't be afraid. I will not let him touch you."

"But what if he kills us both?"

"Then we shall both go to heaven."

"And Almirus?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because dogs do not go to heaven."

"Can my lark go there?"

"No."

"And yet it can fly to heaven better than I can."

"But heaven is too high for even a bird to fly to."

"Are there no beasts nor birds in heaven? Then I had rather stay here, with my father and my lark."

"Stay here, my love, stay!"

"If my father were here, he would beat that wicked man, wouldn't he?"

"The wicked man would run if he saw him."

"When is father coming back?"

"This winter."

"How do you know?"

"He said so."

"And everything that father says is true? He does not tell lies?"

"No, my boy. All that he says is true."

"Is it almost winter?"

"Yes; it will soon be here."

"Then he will soon come! Oh, Almirus, don't die till then!"

The child rose from his little stool, and went to the groaning dog—

"Dear Almirus, don't die and leave us all alone! You can't go to heaven with us, so stay here. I will make a nice house for you, as father did for us. I will give you half of all I have to eat. Lay your head on my arm, and don't be afraid. I won't let the bad man in who shot you. If I hear him coming, I'll fasten the latch with twine; and if he puts his hand in, I'll chop it off with my hatchet. I'll protect you, Almirus!"

The dog lifted his heavy eyes, and wagged his tail, as if he understood the child's words. Then Almirus sighed deeply, as if from pain.

Naomi dropped her work, and leaning her head on her hand, she stared into the lamplight.

When that wretched man left the island, he had called out to her, "I shall come back again, and then I'll tell you who the man is whom you love so much!"

The threat that he would return was terrible enough. But what had he to say about her beloved Michael? Who can he be? And can he be other than he seems? What can this dreadful man, who returns from the other side of the globe, have to tell about Michael? How much better it would be if, as she had said to her husband, he "had put three feet of earth between them."

Naomi was no coward. Brought up in the wilderness, she had learned to trust her own powers. Life in the civilised world had not enervated her. It would have been well for Holofernes and Sisera to know that a weapon in a woman's hand may be dangerous.

The she-wolf knows how to protect her young against a dog. She has teeth and claws. Since that frightful visit from Kristyan, Naomi had worn Michael's carving-knife in her bosom—and it was well sharpened. She fastened her door at night with a strong wooden bar, and tied it in to the latch with twine beside.

Now let Fate do its worst!

If one man comes, he will find a happy woman, a tender wife; but if the other comes, he will find a desperate creature, perhaps a murderess!

"Almirus, why do you groan so?"

The poor dog raised his head from the child's arm, and began to whimper. Restlessly the creature snarled and scratched the ground with his paws. Were these signs of joy or anger? The beast knew that some one was coming! Who is it? The bad man or the good one? The life-bringer or the murderer? Steps were heard on the frozen ground. They came nearer and nearer.

Who was it? All three held their breath to listen—Naomi, Dodi, and the dog.

The steps came nearer still. Ah, they all three recognised them! "Father!" cried Dodi, enraptured. Naomi hurried to cut the twine that fastened the door with her sharp knife. And Almirus rose and uttered a joyful bark of welcome.

In another moment they were in each other's arms—Naomi, Timar, and Dodi! Almirus crawled up to his master, licked his hand, and fell back dead at his feet.

"Oh, never leave me again!" whispered Naomi.

"Now, you must stay with us always!" cried little Dodi.

Michael pressed them both to his heart, and tears streamed down his cheeks as he said, "I will never leave you again, my darlings!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FUNERAL.

The winter finally came to an end. The soft south wind broke the fettered ice of the Platten See one warm, rainy day, and a strong wind rising from the north toward night dashed the unmelted pieces on shore.

The fishermen found a dead body amongst the ragged bits of ice.

Dissolution had long ago set in. The face was gone far beyond the possibility of recognition. But, in spite of this, the body had distinguishing characteristics which identified it as the remains of the lost Baron Levetinczy.

The clothes were easily recognisable as those worn by him on that last memorable day of the fishing in the Platten See, when he so suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. There was no question about the coat trimmed with Astrachan, the studs bearing his own initials. His watch, which had his full name enamelled in the case, was still in the side pocket. But what bespoke most plainly Michael Timar's identity was the pocket-book well filled with bank notes, and the silver purse embroidered with the words, Faith, Hope, and Love—Timea's handiwork, for his first birthday after their marriage. There were several letters also, but the action of the water had made these entirely illegible; they must have been under the ice four months at least.

The next day Timar's gun was caught in a fisherman's net. It was very easy to explain the accident now.

Old Galambosch recollected it all when he saw the gun. His lordship had said to him, that if he were troubled by the

foxes, or a wolf, he would take aim at them, for he was well prepared.

Another remembered that a sudden snow squall arose on that eventful night, and that probably Herr Levetinczy was blinded by the snow while attempting to avoid an air hole, and fell in.

Galambosch remembered now too that he heard a howling, for he slept lightly, and soon after that a struggling in the midst of the storm, yet he never for a moment thought that anything could happen to the noble baron.

As soon as Timea learned of the discovery, she at once betook herself to the fishing place Sitisafok. She recognised the clothes, and fainted away at the sight. She obstinately remained by while preparations were going on for the funeral. She seemed especially anxious about her husband's wedding ring, but this had slipped off.

Timea accompanied the remains to Komorn, and there, with all the pomp and respect due to Baron von Levetinczy, he was buried; the services were conducted in the church of which he had been an influential member; all the ministers in the town assisted the pastor-in-charge at this sad task. The military, the University students, and the schools formed in the procession, with the citizens, poor and rich alike, to pay the last respects to Komorn's most honoured inhabitant and deeply mourned friend. His majesty the king sent a representative for the royal household; business was suspended; for the pride of the people, the founder of so many noble institutions, the friend of the widow and fatherless, the model husband, had come to an untimely end.

Men, women, and children, reverently bowed as the hearse started towards the cemetery, and followed with measured tread and tearful eyes the lost friend, gone never to return.

Athalie sat next to Timea. As these two walked down the steps of their home to the street, each in turn, one consciously, the other unconsciously, brushed the sleeve of Major Katschuka.

When the family, followed by their immediate friends, returned from the vault, Athalie threw herself into the recess where the coffin had stood, and passionately cried that they would bury her too; for there was nothing left to live for now to her.

Herr Johann Fabula fortunately stood near, took the

beautiful woman up as tenderly as a sailor could, and carrying her to a sofa, explained to the astonished spectators that the young lady had loved Herr Timar as a second father.

Six months later a massive monolith marked the resting-place of the late Baron Levetinczy. It bore on its four faces inscriptions announcing to the world the noble character and the official rank of Michael Timar, Baron of Levetinczy, deeply regretted by all who knew him, and mourned by Timea his wife, who erected this monument to his memory. And Timea went daily during her time of mourning to place a fresh wreath on the grave, and to water the sweet-smelling flowers that climbed on the four sides of the railing, planted by her own hand, watered with fresh dew-drops from her own shining eyes.

* * * * *

Theodore Kristyan could never have guessed that after his death he would be the unconscious recipient of such great honours.

CHAPTER IX.

DODI'S LETTER.

Six months had passed since Timar had resolved to make No Man's Land his future home. He had not been absent for a single day during that time. He had plenty of occupation: he was teaching Dodi to write.

It was a most fascinating employment. The little ignoramus made his first criss-crosses with chalk on the bench, and when Timar dictated to him one by one the letters h-o-r-s-e, and then told him that this meant horse, Dodi was amazed, and could not quite understand how a horse should be, and yet should not be, there. But how proud he was when, on a closely lined sheet of paper, he could at last write to his mother a letter which she could read!

That was a greater work than Cleopatra's needle, with its hieroglyphics! When Naomi took this letter, tears sprang to her eyes, and she said to Michael, "Dodi's handwriting is going to be like yours."

"Where did you ever see my writing?" asked Timar, in surprise.

"First, on the copies which you have set for Dodi, and also in the document in which you gave the island to us. Have you forgotten that?"

"Yes; it was so long ago."

"And do you write to no one now?"

"To no one."

"And are you going to stay the rest of the year with us on the island? Have you nothing that you need to do in the world beyond?"

"Nothing. And I will never go into it again."

"But what has become of the interests which you used to have there?"

"Do you wish me to explain."

"Yes, I would gladly have you do so; for it troubles me that a man of your ability should be shut up in the narrow limits of this island. If you stay here merely out of affection for me, and to please me, then I must not accept such a magnanimous love."

"Very well, Naomi. I will tell you all—what I have been in the world—what befell me there—and why I wish to stay with you here. When Dodi has gone to sleep, come out and sit on the verandah, and I will tell you my story. You will shudder at what you will hear; but perhaps you will forgive me, as I feel that God forgave me when He sent me to this island."

When Naomi had put Dodi to bed after supper, she came out to Timar, and sat beside him on a willow bench, putting her hand through his arm.

The moon peeped through the leaves of the trees, no longer with spectral face, nor like the chill paradise of the self-murderer, but like a good friend. And Timar told Naomi all that had happened to him in the world. He told her of the sudden death of the mysterious passenger on his vessel, and of the treasure which he had found on the sunken brig. He told her how rich and powerful a man he had been in the world, and how his ships sailed in all seas; how many acres and houses he owned, and how much he was respected in all the kingdom. He told her how he had taken Timea to wife. He painted to Naomi Timea's sorrows and disappointments, of which he was the cause—he spoke of her as of a saint. And

when he told Naomi, as he did fully, of the scene at night when he watched Timea from a secret hiding-place, and heard his wife defend him against reproaches—defend him even against the man she loved—and how she had fought against her own heart, Naomi sobbed and wept for Timea. Michael went on to tell how wretched he had been in his false position, and yet how impossible it was to free himself from it, chained as he was to one place by his worldly interests, his high rank, and Timea's trust in him; while he was drawn to another spot by his happiness, his love, and the longings of his soul. Naomi comforted him with tender kisses.

At last he told her of that horrible midnight in which Kristyan had appeared at the castle, and how in his desperation he had resolved to end his wretched life in the Platten See, and how as he reached the water and looked into its glassy mirror, he saw the dead face of his tormentor, and felt that the hand of God had withdrawn him from this watery grave; and Naomi pressed him to her heart, as if she still feared he might slip away from her.

"You know all now. Can you forgive me for the sufferings I have caused you, and the wrong I have done you?"

Naomi's kisses and tears were her only and all-sufficient answer. The story was a long one, and the short summer night was over and dawn began to streak the sky when Timar's confession was ended.

"But now all my debts are paid," he said. "Timea has my wealth, and her freedom. Kristyan had on my clothes, and my letter-case was on his person. They would bury him in my stead, and, believing me dead, Timea will be a widow. I have only my heart and soul for you, and that is all you ask. So everybody will be satisfied."

Naomi clung to Timar's arm, and led him to the chamber where their child lay asleep. The boy woke at their entrance, and as it was morning, he fell on his knees, and folding his hands, said the prayer with which he always began the day—"God bless my good father, my good mother!"

Timar, all your sins are expiated. One angel prays above your grave, and another at your bedside, that you may be happy.

Naomi dressed the boy, and sat long in meditation; she needed time to think over the story she had heard. Women have quick and keen perceptions.

"Michael," said she, "you have not quite freed yourself from all your obligations in the world."

"What do you mean?"

"You owe to Timea the explanation of that secret which the other woman told you."

"What secret?"

"That there is a concealed door leading into Timea's bed-chamber. She ought to know that somebody might go in through this secret way to her room, when she is alone and asleep."

"But nobody knows this secret, except Athalie!"

"Is not that enough?"

"Why do you speak in such a tone?"

"Michael, you do not know women! You cannot understand Athalie—but I do. I weep for Timea now, because she has suffered, because she did not love you, and because you are mine. But if she felt for you what she feels for that other man, and if you were to leave me for her sake, as that other man left Athalie, O then God forbid that I should ever find her asleep and alone!"

"Naomi, you frighten me!"

"But all women are made of such stuff, and you did not know it! Make haste to tell Timea this secret. I want the poor woman to be happy."

Timar kissed Naomi on the forehead. "My dear, good child," he said, "I cannot write Timea. She would know my handwriting, and know that she was not a widow; and then I could no longer dwell in this Paradise, like a man raised from the dead."

"Then I will write her!"

"No, no; a thousand times no! She shall have no line from you. I will cover her with gold and diamonds, but not one letter shall she have of yours. You are now all I have in the world. I brought nothing that was Timea's to Naomi—and I will give nothing of Naomi's to Timea. You shall never communicate with this woman."

"Very well," said Naomi, smiling. "I know of a third person who can write to Timea. Dodi shall do it."

Timar could not help laughing. It was so strange, so absurd, so childish and impossible, and yet so sad a thought, that Dodi should write to Timea to be on her guard. Little Dodi to Timea:

Timar laughed, but with tears in his eyes—and Naomi carried out her purpose. She prepared a letter for a copy, and the child wrote it on ruled paper, very neatly, without one mistake; but he understood nothing of what he had written. Naomi gave him dark violet ink, which she had made from the juice of the black mallow, and she sealed the letter with white wax. As there was no seal with a coat of arms on it in the house, and no gold piece to use as a stamp, Dodi took a beautiful green and gold beetle, and pressed him into the wax. This was his seal.

They gave the letter to one of the fruit-hucksters to post. And so little Dodi's letter went to Timea.

CHAPTER X.

"YOU AWKWARD CREATURE!"

Timea bore a second calendar name, Susanna. She received her first, Timea, from her mother, who was a Greek; the second was added when she was baptised. This she used in her signature to legal documents, and commemorated it, according to the Hungarian custom, on her name-day.

This anniversary receives special celebration throughout the country. Delicate cards, with a cordial invitation to partake of the hospitality of the house in honour of the day, are issued. It would be presumptuous for any one to bring his good wishes unasked on this day of days; and equally discourteous not to respect the welcome bidding by a hearty acceptance.

Susanna's Day occurs twice a-year. Timea had selected for her day the one that fell in midwinter, because Timar was always at home then, and because the brilliant social Komorn season was then at its height.

Her birthday, or Timea Day, came in the lovely month of May. Timar was never at home then, and no notice was ever taken of the occasion. Yet, strangely enough, there came as regularly as the day a beautiful bouquet of pure white roses, sealed in a box and sent by post. No name or handwriting ever betrayed the sender; it was a simple unostentatious

memento that the memory of the day existed in the heart of somebody.

So long as Timar lived, Herr Katschuka always received an invitation to the Susanna soiree; but he never appeared. The cards were accepted with hearty thanks, but, two or three days later, regrets on account of unforeseen business were sure to follow.

This year Timea was in mourning, and no reference was made to the winter anniversary by anybody.

The following spring, on the bright May morning of the day that Timea received her accustomed white roses, Herr Katschuka was astonished by an early call made by the head lackey of the house of Levetinczy, inviting him to a birthday party the same evening, signed by Timea von Levetinczy, instead of the good Christian name she had been using so long.

Herr Katschuka was amazed. Could Timea's good sense have left her? What would the world say to this strange fancy of returning to her Greek name, and celebrating the day in a manner sanctified and devoted to good Saint Susanna? Religious Komorn society would surely be scandalised.

For the first time in all these years he decided to go. But not to be marked as a special guest he arranged his departure that he might appear at the latest possible moment which etiquette would permit.

On reaching the Levetinczy mansion he was surprised to learn from the servant who took his sword and mantle that no other guests had arrived. The apartments were all brilliantly lighted, as if a large assemblage was expected. A servant approached him, and announced that her mistress awaited the lieutenant in the inner reception room.

"Who is with her?"

"She is alone. Miss Athalie and her mamma are away to-day, at a great fish-dinner given by Herr Johann Fabula."

The lieutenant was puzzled. No guests, not even the usual inmates of the house, and yet apparent preparations for a great gala festival! There were other riddles for him to solve.

Timar sat under a bright, shining chandelier, dressed in her accustomed black.

But there was no trace of mourning in her face. A slight blush and a pleasant smile illumined her features as she greeted the lieutenant in a friendly manner.

"How late you are!" she said, offering him her hand.

The major kissed the delicate hand reverentially, and said, "Not late, when I am the first arrival."

"Ah, no," she replied; "all are here who have been invited, and await you in the saloon."

She led him into the dining-room; the table was laid for eleven, but not a soul was there save themselves.

As the major approached the table light began to glimmer in the hitherto puzzled brain, and his eyes filled with tears in spite of himself.

In front of nine seats stood a bouquet of dried, faded, pressed roses, each under a glass globe. One quite fresh stood at the tenth place; it had recently been plucked, and made the air redolent with its perfume.

"These are the guests who have ever kept in mind my Timea Day. Will you join them and me?"

The major pressed her hand in speechless happiness.

When he could speak he said, "My poor, poor roses!"

Timea did not check him when he kissed her hand again. The widow's cap, however, was a serious hindrance to further demonstration.

"Oh Timea," he said, passionately, "won't you be persuaded to exchange that cap for a bridal cap?"

"Shall I really?" she asked naively.

"We are just beginning to live," they cried simultaneously; and he folded her in his arms.

"When shall it be?" he begged at length.

"You know Susanna's Day occurs in summer too; let us choose that time."

"But that is so far off yet."

"It is not an eternity, you know, and I must have a little time to get used to my joy. I cannot take it all in at a breath. I must have an opportunity to dream; to learn to hope. You know I have never, never known how. We shall see each other every day; at first only one moment, then two, and later on for ever; is it not so?"

The major could not deny it. She pleaded more powerfully with her eyes even than with her beautiful lips.

"And the guests think it is time to break up; you will go too, now. But wait a moment. I must give you one word from your last greeting."

She picked the most promising of the lovely buds, and

after pressing it to her lips, as she thought unobserved, she pinned it in the major's button-hole. He turned, took the kiss so freshly given, that it should not be lost in the night wind, and departed.

When he looked back, half way up the street, the lights of the Levetinczy residence were out. He was the first and last guest.

* * * * *

Timea gradually learned to hope for happiness. She had an excellent teacher. Since the anniversary, Herr Katschuka visited her daily. Nor was he mathematically precise as to the increasing length of his visits, as prescribed by Timea.

The wedding day was fixed upon. It was to be in middle August, the summer festival of St. Susanna. Even Athalie appeared to be satisfied with the arrangements. She had finally accepted a ring from Johann Fabula, and promised to be the widower's faithful wife. Strange how some men, unalluring though they be, can so easily find young, beautiful girls to marry them, while many a young windbag of a cavalier whistles in vain for a companion!

Timea made up her mind to give her foster-sister the same dowry that Timar long ago offered her, when everything was so different from now.

Mrs. Sophie was delighted with the "amendment," as she called it. She knew, too, how to stroke her kittens the right way. She always praised the major to Timea, but correspondingly lowered her tone and her phrases in painting him to Athalie. She congratulated her daughter on being rid of a man who owned nothing but a rusty sword.

"I'll wager," she said one day, "that that church-mouse of a major still sends to the restaurant for his dinners, and gets them on tick. Let him try to wax those invisible hairs for a moustache: he makes hard work of it—there is nothing to wax. I could not kiss a man who was as close shaven as a woman. You know the Spanish saying, 'A kiss without a moustache, is like an egg without salt.' Now look at Johann Fabula. Everybody honours and admires him, and greets him deferentially on the street. Even the ministers take off their caps, and say, 'Good day, Vice Curator.' Timar, you know, was only Major Curator; they are really side by side

in the world's estimation. To be sure he has not a title; but he is one of the Honourable Sixty, and if he has a mind, by lifting his little finger he can make you lady chamberlain, by making himself city chamberlain."

In those days, a member of "the sixty" and city chamberlain meant something of importance, for one was a member of the public council, and the other commissioner-in-chief of all horses and stock in the city.

Athalie submitted to these ill-timed, well-meant crumbs of comfort. Since Herr Katschuka's return to the house, she had so far gained control over her temper that she was tender and patient toward her mother.

She prepared the afternoon tea for her mother, who always took it with a liberal allowance of rum and sugar. Athalie's good nature went further; she was much kinder to the servants. They, too, were treated daily to a cup of delicious tea. Mamma Sophie, who was not above having chats and confidences with the housemaids, constantly compared Athalie's present goodness with her past violent, uncontrollable ways.

"Oh, I know why she coaxes me and you with her flattery and her smoking, sweet-smelling tea. She is going to be married, you know, and does not want the bother of housekeeping. She could not, to save her soul, cook a plate of flour broth. She wants us to do the housekeeping. She is shrewd and crafty. She'd rather coax us from Timea than try strangers."

Athalie's manner toward Timea and the major was almost servile. She always opened the door for the daily visitor, greeted him with a laughing face, conducted him to Timea, and after a pleasant chat withdrew; and her merry trill could be heard all over the house.

Everyone watched the preparations for Athalie's marriage with Johann Fabula. There was one pair of eyes she could not deceive.

The major penetrated the darkest recesses of her nature, and recognised the blackness there. He felt that there was deepseated revenge in her heart. It had never been satisfied; some way it would have to be: Athalie lived for no other motive.

"It was not thy sin, nay, not thy fault, 'Timea; but thou broughtest disaster with thee when first thy foot touched Hungarian soil. Thy eyebrows, which kiss each other, and

thy pale face, that mocks the brightness of thy foster-sister's eyes and her darker beauty. Thy presence destroys what it would save. The ship sank, and the house; thy husband and thy foster-sister; yet I fear her stronger than thou. If she be not destroyed, I fear for thee and me. And yet thou hast faith in Athalie, and dost share thy home and thy bed with her."

No; Timea suspected nothing. She had nothing in her own heart but love. She had laid aside for Athalie 100,000 gulden dowry. She knew nothing of the mental conflicts, of the midnight visit, of the deadly hate, transformed from love—a hatred that was love after all.

Herr Katschuka remembered all the past, and trembled for Timea, though he dare not utter a word.

The day before Susanna's Day was at hand. Timea had taken off her mourning apparel piece by piece, only gradually, as if she feared to put on the habiliments of joy too suddenly, and thus lose from the delightful ecstasy of hope and happiness that was by degrees quickening her pulses.

The widow's cap was laid by. The pretty white substitute of most delicate lace was lying coaxingly on the table to be tried on. Some latent vanity prompted Timea to wait the major's arrival, that he might enjoy with her the much-desired transformation.

She looked for him long and patiently; it appears that he had been detained awaiting the arrival of the usual bouquet, ordered this time from Vienna.

Letters of congratulation and good wishes crowded in from everywhere, and covered the furniture like innocent snowflakes. There were notes bearing official stamps and well-known coats-of-arms, many in children's handwriting. Besides her extensive acquaintance, Timea had stood godmother to no less than 124 children. And all these remembered with love the day of days to them and to her.

Timea would not allow the seals of any one of them to be broken. A silver basket received them all; the letters were saved to be opened the first evening after the return from the wedding journey.

"See what a singular envelope this is," said Athalie, taking up one that had no likeness to any of its fair neighbours. "Instead of a coat-of-arms, the wax has been stamped with a gold beetle."

"Yes; and what strange ink it has been written with," chimed in Timea, looking over Athalie's shoulder. "Lay it aside with the rest; we will have a jubilee over them by and by."

Still a longing took possession of Timea to break the seal then; but the major was announced that moment, and all else was forgotten. Timea hastened forward to greet her lover.

The happy bridegroom had brought to that very room nine years before, perhaps at the self-same hour, a bouquet of blood-red roses; but another than Timea was the recipient.

And that other was present now. The same mirror still hung on its place to reflect the beauties of the handsomely fitting, beautifully wrought bridal dress, for the wedding that never took place.

Timea received with a blush the proffered bouquet of lovely white roses, and after they had been put in a vase on the mantel, she said—

"And I have a little surprise for you;" and she held the bewitching little lace cap for him to admire. "Shall I try it on?"

The major's "Yes" almost froze on his lips as he caught Athalie's eye.

Timea, with infantile delight, posed before the mirror, laid by the widow's cap for ever, and she held out her hand for its successor, which the major had picked up.

"Now give it to me," she said; "we will see how it looks."

"Can't I help you," he replied; at the same time stepping forward to place the dainty crown on the shining black hair.

"Oh, I am afraid you cannot manage it; perhaps Athalie will be so kind as to lend a hand to the important ceremony."

Timea had no suspicion of the effect of her thoughtless words; but the sudden pallor that overspread Athalie's face did not escape the major, as he remembered how on that other occasion she had said to Timea, "Come and pin my bridal veil on for me." Probably Athalie even scarcely appreciated the full force of her words then; now she realised them in their new application.

She stepped forward to adjust the becoming bit of lace. It required pins to fasten it on either side.

Athalie's hand trembled. As she put in the left pin it pierced through the skin, and Timea screamed with pain, at the same time hastily drawing the injured head away.

"Oh, you awkward creature!"

The same words, before the same listener!

Timea did not observe, but Herr Katschuka did, the expression that lighted up Athalie's face.

An eruption from the lower regions; mingled hatred and shame; the closely pressed lips and the eyes with their strange light betokened the suppressed excitement.

Poor Timea regretted the words before they left her tongue. She hastened to make atonement; she embraced and kissed her, saying, "Please do not be angry, Thali dear. I do not know what made me so rude. You will forgive it; you won't be angry?"

At once Athalie awoke to the situation, and resumed her former servile manner.

"If you will only not lay up my clumsiness against me. I did not mean to prick you. How lovely you are in that dear little cap!"

And she kissed Timea's shoulder.

A nameless horror seized the major, and crept through every nerve; he trembled.

CHAPTER XL

ATHALIE.

The evening before the birthday was also the evening before the wedding day. It was a very exciting time.

The bride and bridegroom sit alone together in an inner room. And how much they have to say to each other! Who knows what? The flowers alone understand the language of flowers; the stars alone understand the music of the spheres; one Memnon's pillar alone understands another; the dead alone understand the speech of the Walkyres, and sleep-walkers alone understand the language of the moon;—so lovers alone understand lovers; and they who have heard and exchanged these mysterious whispers, will never profane

them; they are as sacred as the secrets of the confessional. Solomon, the wise man, did not betray them in his Song of Songs; nor did Ovid in his "Art of Love;" nor did Hafiz in his poems; nor Heine in his songs; nor Petrosi in his "Pearls of Love." These secrets are secrets for ever.

In the opposite side of the house there was a gay company—the servants. The day had been full of toil, the preparations for the festival of the morrow. It had been a field-day, and Mrs. Sophie had been the general in command.

She would have no confectioner or cook from outside to help her, for she knows her art better than any of them; and she is proud that nowhere in the land is there a finer cook and caterer than she. She had inherited this skill from her mother, who had been a famous cook before her day.

The work lasted till eleven o'clock; when everything to be roasted was roasted, and everything to be fried was fried.

Madame Sophie thought it was time to be generous. She called all the household of servants together, to treat them to many dainties which were left over or broken in the preparations for the feast. Here and there a cake that did not come out whole from the oven, jellies that did not keep in shape, odds and ends of sweet things, pieces of pheasants, bits of ham; many things which, though not in good enough condition for the guests, were a great treat to the domestics; and the servants were proud to taste the wedding feast before the guests themselves. Mrs. Sophie gave good drinks too to her assistants—she made a punch which tasted very delicious; and the butler had as much vanilla cream as he wanted, and the coachman had chocolate cakes instead of his usual black bread. All this because it is the night before the wedding.

But where is Athalie?

Neither here nor there. The whispering lovers think she is with her mother, and amusing herself with affairs in the kitchen. In the kitchen, they think she is with the lovers, enjoying the delights of being the third one; or, perhaps nobody thinks about her, either here or there, and nobody asks whether she is in the world or not. But indeed it would be well if some one were to enquire what has become of Athalie.

Athalie lingers in the room in which she first saw Timea. The old furniture has long since given place to new; only one article—an embroidered tabouret—remains as a memento of the past. Athalie was seated on that when the pale-faced Timea first entered the house. She sat on this stool while Lieutenant Katschuka painted her portrait in pastel: and when, at the sudden entrance of Timea, his brush slipped and made a smooch across the picture.

Athalie was seated now on this very stool. The portrait had long ago found its way into the lumber room; but Athalie saw it now as plainly as when the flattering lieutenant had begged her to smile a little, and not look at him so coldly. It was dark in the room. The candles had not been lighted; the moonbeams alone shone through the windows, and they soon moved, and vanished behind the hills. Athalie dreamed a fearful dream, sitting here in the gloom—a dream, the name of which was life!

Pride, good fortune, admiration, had been her housemates. Everywhere she had been flattered and worshipped. Then a child came into her home—a poor, beggarly creature, a pale-faced chit, a cold frog! An object for jests and ridicule, a thing to be ordered about hither and thither. And at the end of two years, this phantom, this white shadow, had become mistress of the house! With her pale face she had bewitched a servant of the family, and made out of him a mighty rival, a millionaire; and not content with this, she had stolen her bridegroom from Athalie, and made him a deserter.

What a day was that when her wedding was interrupted, and she found herself, faint and broken, lying on the ground, with no lover near her! But when all that was over, she had still hoped to be secretly loved, and she had been despised and rejected. What a memory was that of the night when she had gone to her lover's room, and from thence had returned, alone and rejected, through the dark and dreary streets!

Then how she had waited, hoping to see that man the next day at the auction, but he never came!

Then, too, her long years of self-repression and bitter hypocrisy! One man alone had understood her; he knew how she delighted in seeing her rival suffer and fade. And this man, the only hindrance to the happiness of Timea, the stone which blocked the way for her, must slip under the ice

through an unlucky misstep ! And now happiness returns to this roof, and she must be the wretched one—she alone. Oh, in how many sleepless nights had she drained this bitter chalice ? To-day she had had the last drop too much—the humiliating words of Timea, “ Oh, you awkward creature ! ” as she was arranging the bridal headdress with trembling fingers. To be spoken to like a servant, to be reproved in the presence of that man ! Athalie trembled as if in an ague-fit. The house was full of preparations for the wedding to-morrow. The lovers whispered together in the boudoir, and the noise in the kitchen could be heard through the closed doors. But Athalie heard nothing of this tumult. She heard only the whispers of the lovers !

Ah ! she, too, had work to do that night. The room was dark ; only the moonlight crept in. But there is light enough for Athalie to open a small case and take out a phial on which poison is written. These bottles contain the secret results of Oriental chemistry. Athalie looked them over, and laughed as she did so. What a fine thing it would be if to-morrow, when a glass of wine was offered to the bride, the smiles on the lips of the joyful crowd should be frozen, and the guests, gazing at each other's terror-stricken faces, should spring from the table crying for help, and such a demoniac dance should begin as would make the devil himself laugh. How would the pale face of the bride turn to real marble, and how would the proud bridegroom look as ghastly as the grinning death's heads !

Schding ! A string of the piano broke. Athalie was so startled that the phial fell from her trembling hands.

Coward, it was only a string that snapped.

Are you no stronger than this ? She put the poison back in the case, keeping out only one phial, and that not deadly, but a sleeping powder. But this did not satisfy her soul. It was not enough to avenge the words, “ You awkward creature ! ” The tiger does not eat dead bodies ; he is content only with warm and living blood. But *she* herself is to be poisoned, not with the stuff distilled by chemists. Her poison is yonder, in the eyes of the image of St. George !

She slips out noiselessly to seek the hiding-place from which she can peep into Timea's bedchamber. Every tender word, every fond glance there will be a poison that will steal into her soul !

The major is about to take leave, and Timea holds his hand in hers. Her face is flushed. Is not that bitter enough? They are not talking of love, yet they think no one can hear what they say to each other.

The bridegroom questions his bride—

“Do you sleep here alone?” he asks.

“Yes, ever since I have been a widow.”

“And before,” whispered Athalie in her hiding-place.

The lover steps into the room still further.

“Where does this door behind the bed lead to?”

“Into an ante-room, where ladies who visit me lay aside their outer garments.”

“And this other little door?”

“Only into my dressing-room.”

“And where does that lead to?”

“Nowhere. The water goes off in a pipe down to the lower floor.”

“And this third door?”

“That goes into my room, thence to the drawing-room and to the outer entrance.”

“And where are your servants at night?”

“My women sleep near the kitchen, the men in the courtyard. I have two bells above my bed; with one I could summon the women, and with the other the men, if I needed them.”

“And who sleeps in the next room?”

“Mamma Sophie and Athalie.”

“So Mrs. Sophie sleeps there too?”

“Yes; how curious you are to know every detail! To-morrow it will be arranged differently!”

To-morrow! —

“Do you lock your door nights?”

“No; why should I? All my servants love me! The outside doors are fastened. I have nothing to fear inside.”

“Is there no secret passage from your room?”

“How absurd! Do you take my house for a mysterious Venetian palace?”

“But to please me, lock your door to-night.”

What sound is that? Did the dragon at the foot of the saint laugh?

Timea smiled, and looked tenderly at her bridegroom—

“To please you, then, I will lock my door.”

Then followed a close embrace and whispered words.

"Do you pray, my love?"

"No, never."

"And why not?"

"The God whom I worship never sleeps."

"Dearest Timea, I do not like women-philosophers. Leave scepticism to men and piety to women. Do pray to-night."

"But, my love, I am a Mohammedan, and our women are never taught to pray."

"But you are a Christian now, and our prayers are very sweet. Take the prayer-book."

"Since you wish it, I will."

The major took the book, which he had given to Timea as a New Year's present, and found the prayer for women about to be married.

"Very well," said Timea; "if you wish it, I will learn this by heart to-night."

"That will please me greatly."

Timea read the prayer aloud, and Athalie, listening behind the dragon, felt the rage of hell in her heart. This man suspected her secret, and meant to keep Timea awake till morning.

"Curses on them both, and curses on the prayer-book!"

But when the major left, Athalie was in the ante-room before him.

Timea called out from her room, "Let somebody show the major the door."

She thought some of the servants were there, but all were in the distant kitchen. Athalie took the candle, and went before the major through the dark passage. The happy bridegroom had no eyes for any woman save Timea. He thought it was a chambermaid who opened the door for him, and put a silver piece into Athalie's hand. He was horrified when he recognised her voice, as she said—

"I thank you, kind sir!"

"Forgive me, for God's sake! I did not know you in the darkness!" he cried.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, major."

"Forgive me, and give me back the money."

But Athalie held it in her hand behind her back, and said, "I'll give it to you some other time. I have done you a service and earned it all the same."

Katschuka cursed his stupidity, and felt that his sins against Athalie were still the heavier by one silver coin. When he reached the street he did not go home, but went to the headquarters of the watch, where he said to the chief in command, "Comrade, I invite you to my wedding to-morrow, but let me go the rounds with you to-night."

In Timea's house the servants were still amusing themselves; but when they heard the major go away, the chambermaid went to her mistress's room to see if she wanted anything. Timea thought she had just let the major out, and told her to go to bed as she herself needed nothing.

The maid returned to the kitchen, where the coachman was just saying, "I wish we had a punch."

As he spoke the door opened, and Miss Athalie appeared with a punch-bowl full of the tempting beverage, and glasses that clinked beside it.

It was a most welcome sight.

"Long live our gracious young lady!" cried the servants.

Athalie smilingly put the bowl on the table. The punch was made of tea, orange peel, rum, and sugar, as Mamma Sophie best liked it.

"Will you not take some yourself, Athalie?" asked her mother, who was with the servants.

"No, thank you. My head aches, and I want to go to sleep."

Then Athalie wished them all good night, and advised them to go to bed soon, as they would have to rise early the next morning.

The punch was eagerly drank, and pronounced delicious by all, except by Mamma Sophie. When she tasted it she turned up her nose. "This punch has a queer flavour," she said, "like what women use to make their babies sleep—poppy seeds." And she drank no more, but gave her glass to a maid, who was not so fastidious, but drank it all.

She herself was very tired, and having enjoined upon the domestics that they should see that the closets where the dainties were should be well closed, so that no cats could get in, she followed Athalie to her room.

When she came into their common bed chamber, Athalie was already asleep. The curtains were drawn, but she could see her daughter lying in bed, with her back toward the

light. So she made haste to go to bed; but her one taste of the punch affected her, and made her worry lest some mischief should happen to the next day's banquet. When she lay down and blew out the candle, she still gazed at the sleeping form of her daughter, till at last she too fell asleep. She dreamed that she was again in the kitchen, where all the servants were also asleep; the coachman stretched at full length on a bench, the butler leaning on a table, the porter doubled up and resting his head on a chair, and the cook and scullery maids lying on the hearth, the chambermaid asleep under the table; and before each one an empty punch glass. Only her own glass was full; and she dreamed that Athalie, barefooted and in her night-dress, came softly behind her and whispered, "Why don't you drink your punch, mamma? Isn't it sweet enough?" and she thought her child put in more sugar, but still the unpleasant taste remained. "I won't drink it—I don't like it," cried Mamma Sophie in her dream; but Athalie pressed the glass to her lips, while the odour of it sickened her. She struggled, pushed the punch away, and with the effort knocked over a glass of water that stood on the table by her bedside, so that the noise awoke her. She still seemed to see her daughter offering her the nauseous portion.

"Athalie! Athalie!" she called.

There was no answer.

She listened, but could hear no breathing from the sleeper in the other bed. In alarm she rose and went to the bedside. There was no one there. She would not trust her eyes in the darkness, but felt with her hands. The bed was empty.

"Athalie! Athalie! where are you?" she whispered. And then, as she received no answer, a strange shudder passed through her whole body. She tried to move, but could not; to speak, but she was dumb.

There was not a rustle in the house or in the street. But where was Athalie?

Athalie is yonder in her hiding-place. She has grown tired of waiting. It takes Timea so long to learn her prayer by heart. But at last she closes the book. Then she takes her candle and looks at the doors to see if they are locked. She looks behind the curtains too. The words of her bridegroom have frightened her. Lifting the candle, she gazes round the room. Surely no one can come in—and yet she looks directly into the eyes of her enemy who spies upon her! Now she

floor. The coachman is stretched on a bench, the butler lying on a table, the housemaids upon the hearth. A candle, nearly burnt to the socket, throws a flickering light over the grotesque group of the sleepers.

"Murderers are in the house!" screamed Mrs. Sophie, as she entered the room. Only snores replied to her outcry. She tried to rouse first one and then another of the sleepers, calling each by name; but they fell back into their places and did not wake. The loud knocking continued at the door. But the porter did not stir, and he had the key in his pocket.

Mrs. Sophie summoned all her courage, took the key, and went through the dark passages to the door, with the horrible thought all the time in her mind, What if she should run against the murderer? if she should recognise him?—who could it be? At last she reached and opened the door. All was bright there, for the watchmen had lanterns. The captain of police was there too, and the police surgeon, half dressed; but the troop were all armed.

Major Katschuka rushed up to Timea's room. The door leading into it was locked, but he put his shoulder against it, and broke it in. Timea lay on the floor, covered with blood, and unconscious. The major took her up in his arms, and put her on the bed.

The surgeon examined her wounds, and said they were not fatal, and that she had only fainted. Then, as his anxiety was relieved, the major's thirst for revenge awoke. Where was the murderer?

"It is strange," said the captain of police; "all the doors are fastened, and I don't see how anyone could get in or get out of the house!"

There was no trace of the criminal. The murderous weapon alone proved what had been attempted. Timea's precious relic, the broken sabre, lay all stained with blood on the floor.

The doctor said, "Let us search the servants' rooms." The group lay asleep in the kitchen. The doctor examined them, and said, as none of them stirred, "They have all been drugged with opium."

Who else is in the house? Who could have done this deed?

"Where is Athalie?" asked the major of her mother. The mother stared vacantly at him, and knew not what to say, for she herself did not know where the girl was. The captain of

police now went to Athalie's room, and Mamma Sophie followed half fainting, for she well knew that Athalie's bed was empty. But there Athalie lay—asleep!

Her nightdress neatly buttoned, her hair under its white cap, and her lovely white hands folded outside of the bed-covers. Her face, like her hands, pale—and she asleep!

Mother Sophie stood, as if stricken dumb, when she saw Athalie.

“She sleeps soundly too,” said the doctor. “Probably she also has been drugged.”

The surgeon felt her pulse. It beat quietly. “She is fast asleep,” he said.

Not a feature changed expression, as he put his hand on her wrist; not one tremor betrayed that Athalie knew what was going on about her. She is resolved to deceive everyone by her supreme self-control. But one man she cannot deceive—that man whose bride she had tried to murder.

“Is she really asleep?” asked the major. “Take her hand,” said the doctor; “she is sleeping quietly and calmly.”

Athalie felt the major's grasp.

“But see here, doctor,” said the major; “under the fingernails of these white hands there are blood stains!”

At these words Athalie's fingers clutched the major's hand like the talons of an eagle.

The girl laughed, and sprang out of bed. She was dressed entirely. She looked at the group of men with demoniac defiance, and at the major she cast a glance of triumphant revenge; then she turned in a rage upon her mother.

The poor woman could not bear this sight. She fell fainting to the floor.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST THRUST.

One of the most interesting criminal cases in the Komorn court records is that known as the trial of Athalie Braso-witsch.

This woman defended herself admirably. She denied everything ; she knew how to confute her accusers at every point. She surrounded the whole affair with such a mystery that all parties connected with the suit were at a loss how to proceed. Why should she desire to dispose of Timea ? She herself hoped soon to be a bride, and Timea was her sister and benefactress, who was to provide the dowry and wedding outfit. There was not a trace of the attempted murder to be found outside of Timea's sleeping room : no tell-tale blood spot anywhere. Who had administered the soporifics to the servants ? They had partaken on that particular evening of all sorts of knick-nacks. There was not a drop of the fatal punch left ; even the glasses had been rinsed. Athalie testified that she too had partaken of something, she knew not what, that produced the same stupid sleep ; she had heard neither the cries of her mother Sophia, nor the noise of the watchmen. She had only returned to consciousness when the major had pressed her hand.

There was but one human being who had seen Athalie's bed unoccupied a half hour before the excitement ; it was her own mother, and she could not bring herself to the point of testifying against her child.

Her strongest defence was the fact that every door leading to Timea's room was found fastened from within, every

window locked, and she herself senseless. How could anyone under these circumstances pass in or out?

Why should she, of all the dwellers in their house, be the one person under suspicion?

The major tarried till late in the evening, studying the means of entrance and exit. Was it a man or a woman who attempted this dreadful crime?

Timea, if she knew the secret, would certainly not divulge it.

She was still confined to her apartments, from the wounds and the reaction from the fright. She persistently repeated that her terror was so great she could remember nothing; it was all like a terrible dream. The district attorney frequently visited her, hoping to gather some clue to the mystery, but as soon as he changed the subject from generalities to the subject nearest everybody's heart, she became ominously silent.

The doctor advised, one evening when she appeared unusually low-spirited, that they should make a special effort to entertain her. Both he and the district attorney had come in for a friendly evening visit with the major. Herr Katschuka suggested that they should read together the letters of congratulation sent on that eventful name-day, and which had been laid aside unopened. The idea struck Timea very favourably. Her hands were still bound up, so her lover broke the seals and read, one after another, the naive, innocent expressions of love and respect of the little god-children. Her face lighted up with pleasure more and more as Herr Katschuka continued. 'What a peculiar seal this is,' suddenly exclaimed he, as he picked up one letter, bearing a golden chafer as an escutcheon.

"Yes, indeed, it is funny enough," said Timea; "I was struck with it as soon as I saw it."

The major broke the seal. But when he read the first line, which ran, "Madame,—In your sleeping room is a portrait of St. George," the words died on his lips. His eyes stared wildly out of their sockets, and his lips turned blue. Like a crazy man he jumped from his chair, and tore the St. George from its hanging, heavy as it was, frame and all.

There was the hiding-place.

He hastily jumped into the secret chamber, and a moment later appeared again, bearing in his hand the proofs, so long sought in vain—Athalie's blood-stained garments.

Timea bowed her head in her lap, terrified at the sight of them.

The district attorney picked up the letter, which the major had dropped in his excitement, and took possession, in the name of the law, of this valuable link in the chain of evidence fast coming to light. For the secret chamber gave further information. A second visit brought out the chest of phials, and Athalie's diary, containing a full admission of the hatred and murder in her heart, and a well-planned purpose for venting it all in one fell swoop.

And poor Timea forgot that her hands were tied, and, stretching them out, she begged that the discovery might never be mentioned by any of the parties present—to keep it a secret that Athalie might go free.

"It was impossible," they all said in one breath.

The evidence was in the judge's hands, and Athalie must look to God alone for mercy.

And Timea too had to obey the mandate of the law which bade her confront her foster-sister in court as soon as her health permitted.

Oh, what pitiless compulsion for poor Timea!

And she could only repeat what she had already said—that she remembered nothing distinctly.

In view of her compulsory appearance before the court, Herr Katschuka insisted that it must be under his protection, which he could give her as her husband. And so the marriage took place in the presence of two or three witnesses, without pomp, music, or festivity. Her precarious health, and the recent events, forbade all demonstration; and so she consented to be united quietly to the man she had loved so long, in the presence of her physician, the district attorney, and her pastor, who joined the hands of the major and Timea.

The first fair day that permitted the renewal of the trial, by reason of the presence of the principal witness, Timea found herself in the court room, attended by her husband.

Athalie appeared, dressed in mourning, her face pale, but her eyes flaming like fire with passion and defiance. Scornfully she looked over the faces of her accusers.

She writhed perceptibly, though, when the chairman cried—

"Call in Madame Ermich Katschuka!"

Madame Ermich Katschuka! In spite of everything, *she* is his wife after all.

As Timea entered, Athalie evinced manifest satisfaction in those features. Timea's face was marble-like as ever, but on her forehead, almost from temple to temple, there was a red stripe—the scar from the murderous assault.

That was her wedding-gift!

And Timea swore, with trembling, uplifted hand, also scarred for ever, that she remembered nothing of that dreadful night, and consequently could not tell whether it was a man or a woman with whom she had that painful conflict.

But the counsel interrupted her—

“We are not asking you about that now. Did this letter, written by a child, and sealed with a gold-beetle seal, actually come to you by post?”

“Yes.”

“On the day of the attempted murder?”

“Yes.”

“Had the seal never been broken before the time of its perusal in the presence of the district attorney?”

“No.”

“So far as you know, had anyone a knowledge of the contents of this letter?”

“No.”

Timea answered these questions in quiet monosyllables.

“Let the letter be read to the accused, Athalie Braso-witsch,” said the president.

There was silence in the court as the crier read—

“MADAME,

“On the side wall of your room hangs a portrait of St. George. This picture hides a secret niche, the entrance to which is possible through the glass. Please have this hollow room walled up, and take good care of your sweet life, which, please God, may be long and happy.

“DODI.”

And then the president lifted up a cover from the table. Under it lay the undeniable proofs of Athalie's guilt—her stained night-dress, the case of phials, and the diary.

Athalie shrieked at sight of them like a wounded hawk, and buried her face in her hands.

And when she arose her face was no longer pale, but purplish red; not from weeping, but suppressed passion. She had a black neck-ribbon on, tightened in a knot that left its mark on her fair, beautiful neck.

She tore this off suddenly, perhaps to give free vent to her last words, addressed to her hated enemy and successful rival.

"It is all true; I did it, and the only thing I am sorry for is that it was a failure, and *you live*. For your sake I became poor and cursed. Fate demanded that I must be sacrificed for you. I should never have had any peace in the next world, with the consciousness that I had not attempted to kill you. See! there is poison enough in those phials to have ended the lives of all your grand wedding guests! But my thirst was only for your blood! I have slaked that uncontrollable desire, and I die happy. But one word before we part. Your heart must have one more thrust from me, one stab that never will heal, that you will feel with your husband's tenderest embrace. I swear—angels, saints, and devils hear me while I swear!—that secret of the hidden door was known by one other person besides myself—a man; and that man was Michael Timar von Levetinczy! The day after he learned this secret from me, and saw the hidden chamber by my showing it to him, he disappeared. If any one wrote that letter of warning to you, then Michael Timar von Levetinczy cannot be dead. He lives; and you may look for the return of your first husband. The man that was buried in his stead was a thief, who had stolen his clothes, and had come to some sudden, untimely end. Now live on, with this knowledge in your heart, and enjoy your home and your present husband!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MARIA NOSTRA LADY.

The judge pronounced sentence of death on Athalie Braso-witsch for attempted poisoning and murder. But the king commuted this sentence to life-long imprisonment.

And Athalie is still living.

Forty years she has passed in prison, and she is now sixty-seven years old. But her spirit remains unbroken; she is obstinate, silent, and unrepentant.

On Sundays, when the other prisoners go to the church service, they leave this woman shut up in her solitary cell, lest she should disturb the devotions of others. When at first they forced her to attend the religious services, she cried out in the midst of the sermon to the priest, "You are a liar!" and she spat towards the altar.

Often during her years of imprisonment her fellow-convicts have been pardoned out. More than a hundred criminals have received royal amnesty on festival days, but the authorities in the prison have never recommended Athalie to mercy.

When they advised her to change her course, so that she might be pardoned, she invariably replied—

"As God is my witness, so soon as I get out I will kill that woman!"

And she repeats this still.

But Timea is now dead, and has become dust. She died after long years of suffering from Athalie's last dagger-thrust, a wound which rankled in her poor sick heart perpetually.

She could never be happy again, so terribly had Athalie's words shaken her—"Timar is living still!"

This thought, like a cold spectre, stood for ever beside her in the midst of all her joys. It had poisoned even her husband's kiss for her. And when she felt death approaching, she went to the estate of Levetinczy, so that she might not be buried in that grave where she knew not who slept under Timar's monument. She selected her own last resting-place in a quiet spot, shaded by weeping willows, on the banks of the Danube, near the place where her father Ali Tschorbadschi had died and been buried in the river. It was near No Man's Land, as if some strange instinct still drew her thither. Her gravestone and the tall monolith on the island are in sight of each other.

On the fortune which Timar left there rested no blessing. Timea had one son only by her second marriage, but he was a great spendthrift. His vast inheritance slipped through his fingers as rapidly as it had been first accumulated. Timea's grandchild has to live on the trust fund which Timar prudently left in his will for Timea's impoverished descendants.

This single scion of her blood alone survives her.

Another building now stands in Komorn where once Timar's palace stood. On the grave at Levetinczy fortifications have been thrown up. Of all Timar's glory and wealth no trace remains!

* * * * *

But what is going on in No Man's Land?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NO MAN.

Forty years have passed away since Timar disappeared from Komorn.

I was a seven year old lad, in the first primer class, when all the citizens, private and public, united in paying their last respects at the rich man's funeral. There were a few old gossips who, later on, maintained that Baron Levetinczy was still in the body, and would some day appear again as suddenly as he disappeared.

I remember how I looked down every Sunday from my place next the organ (for I was a choir boy), upon the beautiful face of the lady who occupied the seat in front near the chancel. A face so radiant, yet withal so tender!

I recollect too the terror with which the whole city was struck, like a fever contagion, when the news spread that the beautiful lady had been murdered in cold blood by her foster-sister. What a terrible event it was!

I was on the street when the open wagon passed, bearing the convicted criminal to the place of execution. She wore a gray dress with black ribbons, and rode backwards, the priest sitting opposite to her with the crucifix in his hand. The hucksters jeered her, and snapped their fingers at her. But she sat cold and motionless.

The common people followed the wagon; curious children raced in crowds to get a peep at the bloody ordeal. I timidly looked through the barred window. I wonder if I did not catch her eye.

An hour later, the crowd came back dissatisfied. The rabble was displeased that she had been led to the scaffold, only to hear her pardon proclaimed.

They say when the good father announced the clemency that had been extended to her, and offered her the wooden crucifix to kiss in gratitude, the woman, maddened beyond control, bit the image on both sides so fiercely that the print of her angry teeth could be distinctly seen.

But the beautiful lady recovered after those dreadful occurrences, and I used to see her regularly every Sunday at service. She had a red mark on her forehead, but her face grew year by year sadder and paler.

All manner of things were said about her, very contradictory in their nature, as to her happiness or unhappiness. Children hear their mothers relating these floating stories, and carry them to school to repeat to each other.

And so days lapsed into years, and time wore away the distinctness of the story, as the ocean washes a rugged coast smooth.

* * * * *

A friend of mine, an old naturalist, well-known not only at home but in the scientific world, was talking with me one day in more recent years about those singular stretches of land which are still to be found between Hungary and Turkey, belonging to neither province, nor yet apparently the property of private individuals. These bits of land are for this reason a very California to the interested botanist or entomologist, on account of their unusual fauna and flora; and my friend had become a frequent visitor to these islands.

I am an amateur in botanical pursuits, and one autumn vacation my old friend persuaded me to accompany him to the Lower Danube for an outing.

He conducted me to No Man's Land.

My learned friend had been familiar with this spot for twenty-five years or more, before it had assumed its present cultivated aspect.

The island is well surrounded by palisades, and its ends are protected from overflow or freshet. It was drained by canals, and the water thus obtained, served through a curiously original machine, worked by horse-power, to irrigate the highly productive earth.

A genuine gardener could find much to delight his heart and his eye. Many different kinds of flowers and fruits were in abundance. Every square inch of ground served either for ornament or use.

Varieties of birds, fowls of every description, and in the rich meadows hornless cattle, Angora goats, and long-haired black llamas, each in its turn commanded my attention.

One could tell at a glance that it was the home of luxury. And yet I was told that the master of all this luxuriance had not a penny. Money was never brought to the island. Every one who had carried on trade with the owner knew that it was only through barter that the desired products of No Man's Land could be obtained. Accordingly, manufactured goods, furniture, clothing, and the like, were brought at the bidding of the gentleman-gardener. My professor was in the habit of furnishing newspapers, magazines, garden seeds, and birds' eggs of rare species, and receiving in return valuable specimens of insects, pressed flowers, dried fruits, and stuffed birds, which he sold again to continental museums. The colony consisted of one single family, including four generations. They appeared to have no surnames, but were addressed by their Christian names by visitors, as well as each other. The six sons of the original owner had found wives in the neighbouring country; these, with their children's children, numbered forty happy souls.

The products of the island supported them all. They had everything in abundance. The great-grandfather and great-grandmother, hale and hearty, supervise their labours, and each one, old and young, knows his work. The men and boys are gardeners, carpenters, carvers, and shepherds. The women and girls are adepts in all kinds of domestic and farming labours, as well as knitting, dyeing, and weaving. There was a whole row of houses, and when another one is required, the whole colony joins forces to prepare the home for the newly-married pair. Visitors are received formally by the "chief," whom all the rest call "father," and who is known as "Deodat" amongst strangers. He was a handsome, well-built man, in the neighbourhood of forty.

Deodat met us cordially, as if we were friends of long standing, for my escort made an annual pilgrimage, as I have already mentioned.

Our host and his visitor chatted on all matters, scientific and literary; his ideas were of the most advanced type. I could not conceal my amazement and surprise at the culture which Deodat evinced. Where had he learned it all?

"From our senior," answered Deodat, speaking very deferentially.

"Who is that?"

"You will see to-night, when we assemble."

It was the time of apple-gathering. All the women and little folks were engaged in selecting and properly placing the ripe, mellow, and richly-coloured fruit. The mingling strains of bird song and happy hearts made work a pastime. And, as the autumn sun dropped below the horizon, a silver-toned bell reminded all the faithful workers that the day's toil was done.

We followed our guide in the direction of the bell-tones. I discovered that this monitor of work and rest hung in the tower of an ivy-covered villa. The decoration and ornamentation of the habitation, outside and in, was much more marked than on any other one of the houses. It seemed to me as if its architect had lived more in the ideal and the visionary than the more practical builders of my time. In front of the house was a round garden spot, with a table in the centre, and with benches. Everybody was hurrying towards this place at the close of day. "This is where our parents live," whispered Deodat to me. And as we approached they came forward, beautiful in their maturity, fully ripe, but not aged in appearance; the man about eighty, the woman not more than sixty.

The expression on the old gentleman's face denoted a strong character and firm will, and reminded me of some long-forgotten picture. The great-grandmother's face was truly fascinating. Silver threads mingled in her lightish brown hair, but her eye was as bright as a girl's, and she blushed with all the modesty of a bride when introduced to me, a stranger. Each in turn, then, of the inhabitants greeted the awaiting pair. Deodat, the eldest, was the last to receive the parental embrace.

We were invited to the evening meal, at which the good mother of all still presided. The father of Deodat preferred to sit with the visitors at a little side-table, when a curly-headed, angel-faced child, called Naomi, begged to sit in her great-grandfather's lap, and quietly listen to the conversation of the "wise men," as she termed them. As my name was mentioned to the senior, he looked at me silently for a long while, and a noticeable flush overspread his face. My friend asked him if he had ever heard the name before. He was silent.

Deodat hastened to explain that his father had read little

of what had happened in the outside world for the last forty years. He devoted himself principally to scientific works, and books on agriculture. I at once, after the manner of a man who wishes to impart what he considers valuable information and news, embraced the opportunity to relate some of the events as they arose to my mind. He smoked his pipe, and heard without listening; and I soon felt that the sleeping Naomi in his arms attracted him far more than the recent confederation of Hungary and Austria.

When his wife had taken the slumbering child from his arms to put her to bed, he asked me—

“Where were you born?”

“In Komorn, February 19, 1825,” I responded.

“What is your profession or business?”

“I am a novelist.”

“What is that?”

“One who can divine an entire story from the closing pages.”

“Then guess mine,” he said, warmly pressing my hand.

“There was once a man who renounced a whole world, in which he was admired and honoured, and created another, simpler and smaller, in which he was truly loved.”

“May I know his name?”

At this question he appeared to grow several inches taller; he raised his trembling hands, and gently placed them on my head in blessing. It seemed to me at this moment as if I were a child again, and that the same kind hands had stroked that head and rested there in blessing before. I must have seen him somewhere. In answer to my question he replied—“My name is No Man.”

With this he said not another word, but went into the house; nor did I catch a glimpse of him again as long as I was on the island.

This is the present condition of No Man's Land. I understand that, by a special charter of both empires, the island has a fifty years' lease yet, free from all tributaries.

And who knows what may happen to the world by that time!

THE END.

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